Encounter

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Loners in the World

Luigi Barzini

American Chronicle

Letter from the U.S.A

Henry Fairlie

Paul Johnson's Imaginary History
Max Beloff

Story
Rosemary Tonks

Anderson's Unemployment
Samuel Brittan
John Vaizey
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James Griffiths

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Rosemary Tonks

The Pick-up or L'Ercole d'Oro

There will be hot-house winds to blunt themselves
Against the wooden bathing-huts, and fall down
senseless;
Lilos that swivel in the shallow, iced waves,
half-submerged;
Skiffs—trying to bite into a sea that's watertight!

IN SEPTEMBER the warm sea slows down. How long the pauses are . . . then it starts up, first to the left, then far down to the right. Shallow waves pour themselves uphill in a lemonade jelly.

A huge purple headland, with its roads and trees blotted out by the heat, is fitted weightlessly along the top of the water. Just near it, a boat seems to navigate for an eternity across the transparent mass on which it balances.

You hear the drone of an antique seaplane toiling up around the curve of the earth.

Some German tourists are swimming about in the bay. They wear hats, and their bone-dry heads stick up out of the water. As it moves, each sea-faring head pulls along behind it sparkling wet folds of liquid. They talk to one another with a sharp noise like ducks quacking. Far below them in deep emerald water their limbs float down.

A local boy gets up out of this huge bath, and walks ashore. He's wringing wet, with the drops running off his nose, and a saturated pad of hair stuck down around his features. He throws himself to the ground, and hugs the beach to him. It's hotter than a human body, as hot as a cake from an oven. The breeze blows a wave of fire over his flesh.

Up at Bar Mimi, lunch has begun. Bathers move along the low whitewashed walls to find themselves wooden tables. There's a roof of cane thatch overhead, as grey as driftwood.

In the shade up there, everyone's alive. Two boys run about taking orders and writing them down in a blue sloping script with a *penna stilografica.* Bottles of yellow wine are brought, two at a time; held by the necks, they clink.

That woman quite alone, the old one, is the Signora Danielli. She's properly dressed-up for lunch at home, and no one knows what she's doing here where everyone else is young, naked, and burnt. She's brought with her a certain authority, and this being so, after a while it seems quite natural that she should be here. She takes such an interest in everything that goes on that she makes herself part of it, and looks about with her pleasant oldish face and speaks good Tuscan Italian. People soon get used to her, and even nod and say respectfully, *"Buon giorno, Signora"* as they pass her table. After a quarter of an hour, she's almost invisible.

Now there are two tables right at the front, facing the sea, which interest her very much. Something is going on there. At first she only glances at them from time to time, but in the last few minutes she's had the impression that things are speeding up, and she feels that at her age she can't afford to miss a second of it.

At the table on the left, a pretty young woman and an older woman in sunglasses are eating a chicken dish. They don't talk to one another, because the young woman feeds herself and her cocker spaniel, and the older one does nothing but talk to a man at the next table.

This man is at first sight nothing special. A sturdy fellow, about thirty-four years old, he's dressed in a new white American T-shirt with a circular machine-sewn badge on the chest, showing a crown above two fish-like shapes. Out of the T-shirt come red bronze forearms, a massive neck, and on top the face of a handsome char. He could be Italian, but there's not enough black in the features for a Procidian, and if he was a Neapolitan there would be those plump cheeks which droop. No: that handsome woman's face has a red-brown varnish, that's all wrong, and so are those scrupulous finger nails. The grain of his skin is so fine it looks as though it has been scoured clean by a high wind full of

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salt. Auburn hair, bobbed to show how thick it is, goes down to just below his ears.

An engineer, hydraulic engineering, from the Balkan states. Or a gymnast. One senses that in some way his profession is connected with water; it can be read in the tone of his flesh and in the exceptional cleanness of his whole person. He sits lightly, as very fit people do who no longer feel the weight of their bodies.

He and the older woman have so much in common, their voices flow together. He has the mannerism of following his thoughts along with his eyes, so that he seems not to look at anything in particular, but to focus inwardly like an old-fashioned intellectual. Another surprise—he has meticulous good manners. His eating and drinking are done with the minimum of fuss. How curious to observe so much style in what is clearly an invincible body.

THE MANNERS of the pretty young woman couldn't be worse. They're revolting. She's dressed as if she's just got up; a lilac robe with the hood thrown back. It's fastened deep down in the bosom, like a seductive dressing-gown, has trumpet sleeves and an embroidery of lilac beading on the shoulders. The colour suits her perfectly. On her brown plump throat is a chain with a shiny coin which swings and catches in the V of her wrap each time she leans backwards. Her hair is untidy; it's drab-dark with locks of white lamb's wool run through it in the current Italian fashion. She's about twenty, a woman of the world, and her small pretty arms with their white undersides play about all the time.

At this moment her fork is pointed to the heavens with a dripping hot piece of chicken skewered on it. She picks off the meat with her fingers, and dangles it over her dog. Then she laughs loudly and feeds the lump straight down into its jaws. No sooner done than she's back at her plate, getting another forkful for herself this time, and chewing it over enjoyably. And so it goes on; without a glance for anyone, she eats and drinks, wiping off her mouth on her knuckles and throwing bones on the ground, as though she was entirely alone there, and in any case didn't care a fig for anyone.

The older woman with the sunglasses is not unattractive. And with another low concentrated sentence the burnished man attends on her. He seems to need to browse over her face for the rights and wrongs of his argument.

She wants to smoke.

He's up like a monkey. That awkward gritty noise is an old flint lighter—and look at the protective brick wall he's made, it's like a fortress built over her. Off to his own table again, his sex controlled to the teeth. He tosses his head and drops back into the discussion exactly where they left it. He nags her on, they catch fire just as before, and burn furiously.

What on earth makes people talk away like that? Signora Danielli turns her ear, trying to get a few words into it . . . car insurance, yes of course, it's compulsory throughout Italy now, everyone knows about it. But is that really a good enough reason for him to frown, to look as deep as a dagger into himself, and to vibrate with emotion, all at the same time? . . . The ferry out of Naples on a rough day, and they *will* load on lorries of ten thousand kilos, when lorries over five thousand kilos are strictly forbidden. Sunglasses has suffered on account of the lorries, and the way the ferry lurches—both the talkers lurch as the ferry strikes the high seas. Well, says the burnished man, that is the fault of the syndicate; they run everything. Be philosophical! He's counselling her, with a hand in repose on each of his elastic knee-caps. He's content so long as he's free to live an uncomplicated open-air life. As an innocent low-brow, he takes a great breath of it on the spot—oh, what it must be like, what torture, to be enclosed indoors in a terrible box filled with stale air. Sunglasses has to admit that she, too, gets choked by the staleness of the air indoors. He's so satisfied by her answer, and finds her whole personality so congenial to him, that he swings his head off to the side as though he wants to relish the reply and have it to himself for a second longer. By chance this movement takes in the back view of a well-built German girl in a bikini who has just that second got up from the table behind and is now buying herself a Coca-cola at the bar.

Sunglasses also finds that she can be choked by a bedroom full of stale air at night. He's even more delighted, and sweeps his head off

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in another pleasurable movement, as the German girl returns and so can now be seen from the front.

Isn't there something masculine about the way Sunglasses goes at her cigarettes? Possibly that is what makes him feel at ease. She's so freedom-loving, a bold comrade, and as stylish as he is, puffing away there, and even swinging her head good-naturedly, to chew things over, as he does. She appears somehow to draw attention to some feminine aspects of the burnished man: too much quivering along the mouth line, it's so womanish to change it every second like that, for what would happen in a crisis? But still the tremendous flow of energy he's directing towards the table of the two women (and it never slackens), *that* is overwhelmingly masculine.

THERE ARE TWO OTHER chairs at their table, and a wicker bag on each. What a bad arrangement, for if one of the chairs was empty, why, the comrades could sit together and smoke together in harmony. Sunglasses is aware of this, and she hesitates for an instant with her arm raised—if she clears the chair beside herself, won't it seem as though she is inviting him to sit rather close? And that would be too obvious and might repel him and drive him off. Whereas if she clears the chair farther away, she is stating plainly that—that she needs the bag which is lying on it.

The curious part of it is that as she takes hold of the bag, both the lilac girl and the burnished man look away involuntarily, as if it was something they should not have seen.

Now that the set has been cleared, Signora Danielli looks at her watch; she behaves like a good director who has acted in many of her own films, and murmurs: *"Trenta secondi."*

Thirty seconds. And the burnished man gives the impression that he has all day. He seems to slow down. Ah, he's bored, he's lost interest; he's *stopped talking* altogether.

Outside, over his shoulder, you can see that a launch has approached with an engine whose beat is buried in water. Driven by a man in white, it hangs from the beach by the nose, wallowing as the sea moves it from side to side, while it continues to throb.

There's a hiss—one of the waiters levers the metal cap off a bottle. It flies away and hits the ground under the legs of a spotted dog which is roaming there, and which starts back.

The burnished man is ready to leave. It's all at an end. He stands up, and takes a step forward, looking for a boy to bring his bill. No one comes, so he's forced to sit down again—just before leaving—he sits down therefore in the nearest chair, which is now the one from which the bag was taken. He seems to be put out—no one likes waiting for a bill—and not entirely aware of what he is doing, because he takes a piece of bread from the bread basket as though he were still alone at his own table, filling in time. He ignores the women, frowns as usual, and goes on concentrating—on what? On his own thoughts, which have always interested him so much. Grudgingly he admits by his gestures that there are, after all, other people at the table with him. They must have moved in to his table when he got up to leave a moment ago. In any case, it is *his* table, it always has been, but courteously he offers both the women some bread from his basket so that they don't feel uneasy.

THE BURNISHED MAN begins to talk. This time he speaks only to the lilac girl, to whom he has not previously said one word. His voice is pitched deeper. He is less of a philosopher, much less fond of the open air than he was. Sunglasses listens with interest, and waits patiently for her turn in the conversation, but it does not come. She wants to smoke; then let her smoke! No one is going to stop her. She sits where she has always sat, and although a minute or two ago she had a companion at her table and someone to talk to at the next, she now has two complete strangers, unknown persons, who ignore her and speak only to one another so rapidly that it becomes a dialect no one else can understand.

How frightful to be brushed off like that as if one was lower than the dirt. The most hardened would be sapped and dispirited. She's so low that if they were to give her one word, she could make a meal out of it, and pull herself up and move her limbs a little. It's so exhausting putting up a fight alone, the joints become rigid and fasten the body together in one position and there's no juice

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to unfasten it.

They will not rescue her, because they have forgotten she is there. If she was to draw attention to herself, they would then see her, and might possibly speak to her: who knows?

Presently she makes a fierce effort: she rises to her feet and pushes back her chair. To her, it's like a bomb exploding. But no one has heard the sound. She sways, nearly off balance, and with her beach-bag walks away carefully. As though she has a scar on her face, she cannot quite manage her features, the shock seems to have given them a wrenching. But the further she removes herself from the two brutal young bodies at the table, the greater is her well-being.

She gets herself down to the beach. On the burning white sands she spreads an orange towel, and prepares herself for a sunbath and a siesta. Quite worn out by life, she drops off into unrefreshing middle-aged slumbers. As the ugliness leaves her face, it turns into one of those curious death masks which are taken from a musician or a poet who has been defeated by life and resurrected by death; smooth, peaceful faces, they become perfect examples of other worldliness, and thus the noble face of Death itself.

And *they?* Signora Danielli watches them.

They talk with hunger and thirst; with a radiant thoughtlessness. Their bodies, already prepared by water and fire for such a meeting, sense the approaching moment of supreme carnal gratification. Beside this, nothing else matters.

They talk until they've talked themselves out. And then, each golden barbarian rests, with eyes passively turned away from the other, the feast to come. You don't look directly when you want something as much as that. They appear expressionless . . . almost idiotic . . . but above all, monstrous.

WHO IS GOING to pay the bill for this interesting lunch? On the island the young males who stand at street corners and stare with onyx eyes, hissing like snakes at foreign women who attract them, expect to be paid for and to receive presents.

The lilac girl rummages and finds one of those flat leather purses which are made in North Africa and sold around the Mediterranean to tourists by itinerant Genoese. It's closed by a fringed flap which tucks into a slot, and is decorated on the back by two brightly coloured strips of leather threaded through the glaciated manilla surface. Ridiculous object! You couldn't get anything into it—not even a wad of Italian money, the coloured paper rags they use. She opens it, looks inside, gives a pretty trill like a handbell being rung, closes it and stows it away again. Out comes a buckle made of imitation stones—some dress-making project: she holds it in dimpled hands with little fingers which fasten and unfasten themselves as children's do.

So the meal is over. Up they get, smiling pleasantly at one another like strangers again, and casually, without a backward glance, they separate. The lilac girl with her spaniel, her untidy bag, her looped robe, passes the table of Signora Danielli. . . . Oh, that voluptuous cold puppy fat on her little face, how rich. And the cork sandals that slip off her heels, they're so sluttish, so high and silly, she can hardly walk in them. She turns towards the beach and joins the figure which is drowning in sleep on the orange towel.

The burnished man pays his bill matter-of-factly, as though he always spends exactly that amount. The boy doesn't ask him about the bottles or total up a long list, so it's clear he pays for no one but himself. While he does it, that thick back is toward the beach. He won't look at her, won't look at the lilac wrap coming off. He's devoted to his pockets, his wallet, and carefully buttons away some money into his shorts, and makes it neat. Having got together his personality in this way, he's ready for his car and strolls out. There's something so grim and fixed about his eyes . . . in his head, among all those thoughts, is he holding intact some essential datum which were chattered out piecemeal across the tablecloth? "No, I hate Bar Elio, it's full of old, old men ugh! Our road's so nice, and the house, who wants to go out and be goggled at by old men? The rose-coloured house in the Via Baiola, I'm always there in the evenings, lazing about." What a vapid, futile little mind; he would have pounced on the words, and from that moment was dead to the world.

Signora Danielli notes that his is the yellow Alfa Romeo with the hood down. The tires jerk and throw back sandy dust. From zero the machine vanishes down the

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road, whining, and that's the last of him.

The Signora catches herself stretching after the entertainment. The boys are rolling up tablecloths filled with breadcrumbs; there's a pile of plates, greasy forks stick out of them. Oh it's quite finished.

She knows what she's seen; a piece of her own youth. That reckless piece, it trapped her, and made her live a certain kind of life, not the kind she wanted at all. To think that she'd forgotten what it felt like, the elemental sex happiness which belongs to the animal kingdom, and which makes you behave so badly. Five tables away she's seen it all again, hideous idiot joy, in which the actors are lost and mad, and their poor accomplices become the same.

She's so sorry for them. And grateful to think that she doesn't have to wash and get ready for a lover.

Yes, she's old, but wide awake. When she escaped from that sort of youth, she got away only by ageing, only that way did she obtain real life. And now she walks in the marble of her library; her etched features look inward and outward; she has arrived at herself. That is the classical Italian happiness; the great joy and gaiety of understanding yourself.

THE SUN REACHES the waters of the horizon at seven o'clock and at once goes out. Sometimes a cloud left over from the day maintains a red flame on board for half an hour into the night. Sweet water dews fall silently down the mountain slopes.

Primitive peoples go to bed early, for everyone fears the dark.

A wind gets up on one side of the island . . . under cliffs of unpolished marble, there's a piling up of waves, a moaning that begins in the telegraph wires.

Here's Signora Danielli. She's parked her car and now steps back in the dirt road to look up into infinity at the Milky Way, the *Via Lattea*, of which she is a part.

By the light of it, she can also see that her two cats are watching her attentively from the driveway of her house. They run off as she approaches, and leave a dark object on the ground.

She has her husband's stick in her hand; the object may be an animal. Close to, she can see it's a large rat, a dark piece of instinctive life force, which they've killed and brought for her. She's turning it over gently with the stick, and it rolls softly in two sections like chamois bags of trinkets, when there's a blast, enough to split her eardrums, and a blinding light flashes on and off high up the mountain. Every stone shakes in its socket, and the vibration runs through her body. A storm has begun.

At that moment the rat comes to life. Ignited by the shock, it leaps gracefully into the air like a dancer, with the tips of its delicate feet hanging beneath it. Signora Danielli says compassionately: "Poor thing, poor thing. I must kill it." She strikes it feebly with her stick, so that it jumps up again and again, in a reflex action, each time higher than the last. And frisks about on the tips of prehensile bones in a spirited way, while the clouds grumble like a barracks full of soldiers and shoot out crackling shots.

She has to hit, hit, hit. When it's over, she's panting and trembling. She leans on the stick, still watching it with fierce eyes, for a long time.

WHEN SHE GOES inside she feels so uneasy that she stops to breathe in the familiar smell of the hall, but she seems to have brought in with her the wet darkness from outside, and the sickly wind that was blowing in the garden. Overhead, two gigantic air-shapes with sheer sides of rock, collide, trying to split one another open. You can hear the blistering and cracking of the seams.

She mounts the staircase to her bedroom.

There's a light on in her husband's large dressing-room next door. This is the irritating, beloved husband who made her change her life so many years ago. He's moving about on some business of his own, according to a set of thoughts which are entirely unknown to her.

Oh but the thunder! Now it bears down solely on the house in an effort to smash the roof in; the electric light bulbs flicker. At any moment there may be total darkness: the island's supply is always confused by an electric storm.

Her husband is pulling drawers open impatiently in the old *armadio* . . . the thunder shifts its position, and a watery cough goes off far into the distance, echoing as it strikes against unseen obstacles and passes through

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great empty rooms, through the august *Sala di Giove*, and on and on . . . then she can hear the domestic sounds of the house again, and the double rap of the drawer handles as they fall back on the wood, rat-tat. He's looking for something: possibly he's going out for the evening? She cheers up at once. She won't be expected to cook dinner; she can go to her books. She can spend the evening quietly finding out the attribution of "Ayin" among certain old volumes with end-papers of marbled plum. The pleasure of it floods over her in a rush of blood as sweet as honey.

He *is* going out. She remembers now; she told him he was driving too fast, and he opened the lid of his eye at the corner and showed her some light green crocodile water. How furious he was! He let her see what was going on inside, but he had no idea of *how much* he'd shown her. He lowered the lid, after he'd given her a sight of the green water, and they walked along together, side by side, thinking it over. She was very interested by what she had seen. He would have to be teased; or, if he wouldn't respond to that, then he would have to be fought with. She could never afford to relax, since he shifted his ground psychologically every minute. If she became intimidated, she would go under forever. "It took me twenty years to learn how to be rude to you," she would think, looking at him, "and you *like* it. But I do not." "When he goes out," she thinks later, "I must remember to be sharp to him, as though I have a grievance. That kiss on his neck, behind the ear, the one that keeps him sealed in and made safe by my love while he's out in the world, that must go . . . or I shall lose value in his eyes."

AN OLD MAN of sixty-eight opens the door of the dressing room, and stands there, fastening a despatch case. He has a handsome toast-dry face, peevishness gives it life. He wants to be prevented from doing what he is doing, and from leaving the house in the middle of a storm in his well-pressed grey suit with the brown silk handkerchief tucked in the pocket.

Out of habit, she opens her mouth spontaneously to tell him about the rat; then stops herself. She hasn't worked over the story to see whether it does her credit; if there's a weak spot he'll use it against her. She becomes her husband for an instant and passes the thing through his mind.

Although she hasn't said a word, the old man has seen her lips move. He at once hastens off downstairs, convinced that she's going to intercept him, which is exactly what he wants. In the hall, he struggles into his coat with the thought that he's being nagged to death, and flies out into the darkness as the first drops of rain fall. He's punishing her by leaving her alone in the middle of a storm. For his part, he's from a very old Neapolitan family, and the storms of the Mediterranean are in his blood. They invigorate him with what he is already; he's more decisive, flashing, aristocratic, at these times when the ordinary people bury themselves in the ground, or in their houses, with their wet dogs clinging to them and belly-crawling on the floor beside them. For the same reason he drives his car fast, and he will not be shackled and reduced to an impotent booby, when such boldness is his by right of birth.

She listens calmly to the steps of this man so stuffed with insolent bad behaviour. He will have reached the eucalyptus trees by now, and will be opening the door of the car. Because he is alone, he will drive very carefully and quite slowly after all. He will go straight to Tonino's; no, to Marcello's, in the port. And they will all turn towards him and light up as he comes in, since he's known to be a born story-teller. He'll sit down, make the "thump" on the cloth with his closed fingers which is the prelude, and begin to be amusing. It only takes a minute or two, and people go red and their eyes shine with stupid glee. Women, underwear, lavatories, husbands, these subjects are well known to be funny in the first place, but if you cram them into an Italian meat mincer all over again, out come brand new sausage jokes, naked, obscene, childish. It's appalling to have a quick and filthy mind like that, to wink, and raise your little old man's finger in the air and wag it about.

They say he could go on the stage, and get paid for it. But he prefers to be close to people, and laughs along with them and goes a good dark red himself. In no time they're all roasting hot, it's like a volcano in there, they bang on the tables and yell: *"Basta!"* He dries his face—which is streaming—and

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grows younger every minute. You can just see the sort of young man he used to be . . . there, *now*, there's the *Ercole d'Oro*, see the way he breathes in contemptuously in a long-drawn-out sneer? He was once a glowing, lustful fellow with a great black chin with an oily dent in it: the women must have gobbled him up. But then, why the story-telling? To keep the cold out, of course. Otherwise old age would get inside and creeping death would reach the viscera, especially the liver. He needs the heat of other healthy human beings constantly, in order to remain alive. But he must have a reason for waylaying them, and getting them to sit down and unbutton their coats. . . .

And so this handsome well-dressed man becomes a joke-jobber. When the fire goes out of him, as it does regularly, in fact nearly every day, he drives off, off, away from his house with its books and sofas and the polished chequerboard floors where his wife walks about.

"Vitti, Vitti, have I done this?" Signora Danielli asks the man in her head. She's lighting an oil lamp and bends over it.

Immediately the house is engrossed in the darkness of the mountain: the electricity has failed on this side of the island.

She now has a circle of yellow light, and goes and comes within it, bringing kitchen candles to be lighted. This primitive task reassures her, and as each flame develops and burns steadily, her thoughts settle.

The rattling noises of the branches against the walls, and the sea wind that stops the rain hissing into the ground and carries it off sideways with a dolorous moan . . . these things are necessary so that the grave Italian interior may double its peace. Nothing moves. The table where the lamp stands is the centre of the world. To sit still there is to be in touch with everyone and everything. How the books along the walls excite her; the titles are serious and contain real knowledge, they are always new because each time you read them the same words say something different. There are works by Maxwell on the Tarot, on Alchemy, on Persian seers, on Sai Baba. In this earthly paradise, she cuts with a little alabaster paper-knife into the cartridge paper of a new book; rough edges form. She has entirely forgotten her husband's existence.

PRESENTLY—it's as though someone has called to her—she lifts her head and listens intently . . . some ineffable matter. . . .

They will be meeting about now, the burnished man and the lilac girl. He'll go to her house after dinner; it's all arranged, and they can't wait any longer. Sunglasses will have to go up to her room; it'll be one of those small white-washed rooms with damp marks low down, with an icon painted as though by a child, and an unsteady wicker table. She'll be sent up to her room after she's played bath-attendant. For the lilac girl will soak herself slowly, and call out from her bath often; the spaniel will walk in and out of the open bathroom door while she splashes water at it. When she steps out, so slippery, to dry herself, Sunglasses will put the cigarette into her mouth as she hands her that expensive rough towel, which she'll tuck under her armpits. And lifting up her arm to get it right, she will look into the hollow of her young armpit, as white as a groin.

When the lights go out, the lilac girl will go on drying herself in the warm darkness; she'll be able to see perfectly well. And she'll scoff at her dog because it whimpers and is craven.

Then Sunglasses will bring a lighted lamp through the night to this indoor bathing scene, and the girl will already be dressed in her lilac robe. Her body will already smell of Calèche, that heavy Parisian powder which is for much older women, because it dresses the skin with the milky dust of another skin as heavy as soil, and makes it plump. As for her hair, she'll have pushed it up in tresses on top of her head; she can't be bothered to do it. The atmosphere of the lamplight allows one to be slack. But for the shuddering behaviour of her dog, she would be ideally contented in these conditions. Accustomed to making a slow toilet, in any circumstances whatsoever, she's at home on the earth. With Arab-style gestures that concentrate the whole mind, she brings the cosmetics she wants within her circle of movement. Her arms bend and stretch themselves forth; it's impossible to look away from her.

And when the knocking on the door comes, in the middle of the storm—a man like that will always arrive in the teeth of fire and water—it will be Sunglasses who has been listening for it, who raises her eyebrows

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dreadfully, and leers: "The Devil is here!" It will be the lilac girl who ignores it, and goes on brushing with her hairbrush the warm flesh of her dog's silky ear. And keeps her eyes turned away.

Sunglasses will go upstairs because they are stronger than she is; the force of it is too much for her.

Only when she's closed the door of her room, only then will the lilac girl stir herself. On her way to the front door, she'll stoop and pat her spaniel on the head.

THEY SAY that the helicopter station is the ugliest spot on the island. It consists of a square of concrete which juts into the sea and has a blockhouse on one corner.

Signora Danielli is waiting for her husband who has gone to Naples for the day. She's under a poor-looking tree, just a scraggy thing frizzed up by the hot concrete. There are cars parked along the roadside, and in one of them, lo and behold, the lilac girl alone with her dog.

The helicopter flies in badly, like a hornet. It luffs and is unsteady. A boiling wind, full of grit, buffets the Signora. Her skirt whips itself against her legs, her hair tugs away from her head, and she holds to the tree for support.

The machine comes to rest, screaming, tipped about on three soft legs. While the blades of the propeller go on thudding round horizontally, steps are wheeled up to a door which opens underneath it, and people start to get out with hasty movements like marionettes.

She can see her husband bending down inside at a window, and waves to encourage him. The lilac girl is out of the car and waving also. Signora Danielli looks for the burnished man. In conventional clothes, he must definitely be a god . . . but no sign of him.

Then it must be Sunglasses she's meeting. But no, she's not there either.

Then it is some entirely unknown person.

A middle-aged man carrying a despatch case and an umbrella hurries forward and embraces the lilac girl. He is bald, with glasses, and quite short; a strong pale nose sticks out. He's rich, obviously; everything about him appears to be new. Only he himself is a little worn, with lines and thoughts, against the worsted cloth, the crocodile and gold that show here and there. He holds her to him, deep feeling binds them; he loves her, and is besotted with her.

As for the lilac girl, it's a metamorphosis. Those animal gestures of the worldly-wise concubine which Signora Danielli thought belonged to her, those atrocious manners and hidden eyes—they're gone in a puff of smoke.

A happy school-girl looks straight into the eyes of her only friend and laughs out loud with joy. The lilac girl rubs her head against his coat, and can't stop talking for one minute.

He gets into the driving seat of the car and pulls gently at the ear of the dog, which tries to climb into his lap.

With the animated lilac girl beside him, he starts the engine. How happy they are; he drives, and laughs, without taking his eyes off the traffic.

"Vitti, *cara.* It's been a good day, I can see that. No, you don't look tired, not at all. Here? Well, nothing very much. I had to get Filippo to tie up the creeper, it was broken by the storm. And we buried the rat, so you won't trip over it again."

She knows from his expression that it has not been a good day. There is the first sad glance from the *via dolorosa* of his thoughts. Oh, how disappointed he always is. And she tries to give him everything, to renew everything for him, so that life will be good enough for him. But he turns away, ill with nerves; he can't bear it when she beseeches him to be happy, against his will. And is so happy herself, for no particular reason.

They walk to their car, side by side, in silence.

She gets a sight, in the distance, of the other car just disappearing. The car she might have been in forty years ago, if she'd married her friend. But instead she married her lover. And that road led her only to herself.

"All because of a certain feeling he gave me, once or twice, which made me cry out, *'Now I shall not have lived in vain!'* Because I expected that feeling from life, and tried to take it for myself, it promptly vanished. And now I can't even remember what it was like. And don't even care."

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Henry Fairlie

Letter from Washington

"WHEREAS Pompey declared that all who were not actively with him were against him and would be treated as enemies, Caesar announced that all who were not actively against him were with him. . . ." In these words of Suetonius is much of the story of the American presidential election of 1972. The strategy of Richard Nixon from the beginning to the end was designed to include; the strategy of George McGovern at the beginning had the effect of excluding and, however much he tried to reverse it in succeeding months, it was to the end perceived by the great majority of the people to be exclusive.

This aspect of the campaign of George McGovern was always insufferable: the claim that there was only one *moral* position on each of the questions which they chose to make a political issue. It was this, on the issue of the war, that enraged George Meany.

The support which Meany and his AFL-CIO have given over the years to American foreign policy—to the prosecution of the Cold War in general and of the war in Viet Nam in particular—was not treated by George McGovern and his supporters as the expression of a deep conviction on the part of George Meany and the unions, but as a peccadillo which they might be lightly forgiven in exchange for their votes. Indeed, in one of his most revealing statements, which he was reported to have made shortly after his nomination, George McGovern said that if he was willing to forgive George Meany for his support of American foreign policy, George Meany should be willing to forgive him for his opposition in Congress to the labour position on an item of domestic legislation.

By all accounts, the levity of this equation stunned George Meany. To him and to the unions—as to the British trade unions, during the critical years, and to the greater part of the international trade union movement—support of the American and the Western positions in the Cold War was an article of faith, in the truest sense of the term. As long as Communism appeared to be menacingly on the offensive in the world, they set themselves against its advance in response to one of the deepest impulses of the working-class movements since their earliest growth in the nineteenth century: their fear and hatred of tyranny as such, and of the régime which, after 1945, they perceived to be a tyranny within its own borders, and to be in a position to impose that tyranny beyond them if it was not checked.

Whatever else there is to be said, one cannot dismiss this impulse in an Ernest Bevin, or expect a George Meany just to shrug it off, as if it was no more than a lapse; and George McGovern never seemed to understand the size of the challenge which he was making. He might have earned more respect if he had made something of the fact that he had questioned American foreign policy in the Cold War even at the time of the Truman Doctrine; if he had made it plain that his own views had been born of a deep conviction; if he had acknowledged that George Meany's views had been born of an equally deep conviction; and if he had then suggested, from this quite honourable stance, that the two of them, in the changed conditions of the world today, might each have something to contribute to the other.

ONE CAN IMAGINE Robert A. Taft, the only member of the Senate who did not applaud as Harry Truman announced his policy in 1947,

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taking such a stance; and one can imagine men who had then profoundly disagreed with him being willing now to cooperate with him. When one talks of the political honour of Robert Taft, one means above all that men knew where he stood; with such a man, differences can be seen to be legitimate, and legitimate differences to be honourable.

But the credibility—a characteristically spineless word which we seem to need because we can no longer bring ourselves to expect honour in our public men—of George McGovern proved to be fragile in large part because, even on this greatest of issues, the direction of American foreign policy since 1945, he seemed to say that his own position should be forgiven and forgotten as lightly as he had said he would forgive and forget the position of George Meany. But one cannot, on so tremendous a question as the encounter between the United States and the Soviet Union during the past quarter of a century, forgive and forget; one must confront the differences, and let the world know where one stands. So, when John Connally, in his television broadcast, placed Richard Nixon in the line of Franklin Roosevelt, of Harry Truman, of Dwight Eisenhower, of John Kennedy, and of Lyndon Johnson, one could see the answer which George McGovern could have had—and which Robert Taft would have had—but George McGovern himself could not, by that stage, find it. He had, so to speak, forgiven and forgotten even himself too completely; he had evaporated.

THE COMMITMENT of the United States to the resolute prosecution of the Cold War was not the doing of a few "guilty men." It was the doing of a whole people, united as a people rarely are in support of a foreign policy; of the two major parties, proclaiming their bipartisanship; and of the trade unions and the Democratic Party in particular. (It was also the doing, of course, of the trade union movements and the Social Democratic parties in other countries, which supported and encouraged the United States in its determination.) How, then, when the conditions which yielded the Cold War have changed, and when some of the errors of American policy have in turn yielded the war in Viet Nam, does one ask a whole people, and the trade unions and the Democratic Party in particular, to make terms with their immediate past? This was one of the profound questions at stake in the American election; and George McGovern and his supporters never faced it with any *gravitas*.

IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE to explain to anyone who is today "under thirty" that, when some of us were "under thirty", the Social Democratic parties of Europe and the United States (I count the Democratic Party at that moment as one) seemed to offer, not just a programme for the future, not even just a hope, but a vision of what a political community might be. Even if one was sceptical of the programme and the hope—and this was very much my own case—the vision was still enlivening and humanising. It was extraordinarily generous in its estimate of human capacities and human longings. Unlike the fearful ideologies with which it did battle in turn, twice in a generation, and unlike also the transcendental movements of the Left today, it used a human gauge to measure the condition of men; and the result was that it included all manner of men—yes, and of women, too—within the reach of its concern.

There was much that it overlooked. It neglected an entire aspect of human nature which, in reaction, many political movements today seek to celebrate; and the democratic Left is paying a heavy price for the omission. In a word, the vision, when it was pursued, seemed to be drab. Even so, we were proud at the time, and we were right to be proud, to be led by men of the size of Clement Attlee and Harry Truman. They were most sizable—most meet—answers to the Hitler who had just been removed, and to the Stalin who was still there. It was as if we were saying that we did not need great or glamorous leaders, but that instead we would promote leaders of our own size. We had politics in their place, and so we gave a fit place to politics.

A characteristic instrument of this social democratic vision was the Americans for Democratic Action; and it would have done George McGovern the world of good if he had taken a day off, at some moment last spring, to read the files of the *ADA World*. The copy of them in the Library of Congress is yellowed and falling apart; it was produced on cheap newsprint, before left-wing movements had thought to employ Madison Avenue to tell their message. The mustiness of the pages indeed seems appropriate; yet there is much in them of which we need to be reminded.

AT THE VERY FIRST annual convention of ADA, on 21-23 February 1948, a post-graduate student

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of the Pulitzer School of Journalism at Columbia University was elected to fill an extra seat which had been granted to the Students for Democratic Action. The name of the post-graduate student was Frank Mankiewicz, one of the more important and more serious members of George McGovern's campaign staff. What is more, a later issue of *ADA World* reported that he had become an early leader of the "Students for Eisenhower" movement.

One does not drag this information out of the files in order to make an easy point against Frank Mankiewicz. One merely thinks that he would have served George McGovern better if he had said to him at some point: "A lot of us were members of ADA in those days, and we supported the Truman Doctrine, and we even tried to procure Dwight Eisenhower as the candidate of the Democratic Party. How do we reconcile our attitudes then—which were the attitudes of the great majority of the people—with our attitudes now—which we hope will become the attitudes of the great majority of the people? . . . " This was the size of the task on which George McGovern was embarking. Yet one is almost certainly right in saying that Frank Mankiewicz regarded his own ADA past, as George McGovern regarded that of George Meany, as a lapse, a peccadillo, an indiscretion, to be forgiven and forgotten.

Americans for Democratic Action was the kind of movement at which any of us may joke: the kind of movement in which all the men seemed like Beatrice Webb, and all the women like Sidney Webb. Every fault of every social democratic movement was accumulated and compounded within it. But so was every virtue. It was at the first national convention of ADA that William Green of the American Federation of Labor and Walter Reuther of the Congress of Industrial Organizations went to the same platform—seven years before they united—and in turn pledged that they would establish a "working partnership" in order to ensure a progressive majority in the 1948 elections, when the Democratic Party seemed to be in an even worse condition than in 1972. All three of them—AF of L, and CIO and ADA—then went to work, with a young liberal hero, Hubert Humphrey, in the vanguard; and they boxed Thomas Dewey down.

THIS IS ANOTHER STORY which needs to be told well to those who are "under thirty" today. There was a genuine cooperation, in those days, between the unions and the intellectuals; neither despised the other; neither patronised the other. The intellectuals were not removed—they had not removed themselves—from the cares and aspirations of "ordinary working folk"; and the trade unions respected the leadership and the skills which the intellectuals had to offer. This was one of the great fertile alliances in the politics of the Western democracies during the first half of this century; and, if it has come to an end, if the rupture which caused the downfall of the Democratic Party in the presidential election of 1972 is permanent, then it is a tragedy.

In this, again, George McGovern seems to have had little comprehension of the size and meaning of what he was attempting. He and his supporters, as they sought his nomination, did not capture the Democratic Party; if they had done so, they might have been able to make it work more effectively for them. They replaced it. They drove it out of its own convention. "They have got their own party going", said a traditional local leader of the Democratic Party after the nomination, "and they have not invited me." That was the measure of it.

In the event, the Democratic Party at the national level remained astonishingly loyal, in spite of the desertion of so many voters, to George McGovern; and in the state and local elections it more than held its own. (Far too many people still do not understand that the great political parties in the Western democracies are genuine political institutions, serving a need of our time, and able to survive blows like the nomination of Barry Goldwater in 1964 or of George McGovern in 1972.) But what George McGovern and his supporters do not appear to have understood, until it was too late, was that parties, as well as being vehicles of change, are vehicles also of continuity: of that continuity in their social lives, and in the national life as a whole, without which most people cannot act well, and certainly cannot cooperate. In any social or political life of any consequence, some things of importance must be in the same place tomorrow as they were yesterday; and so must some people of importance.

TO SAY THAT the weakness of the major parties at the national level is a drawback in American political life is perhaps a little futile:

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one may as well criticise the size of the country, the diversity of its peoples, the nature of its political tradition, the purpose of its political system. But as an outsider from another political tradition one certainly misses the strength of its party system. I always listen to the first impressions of fresh arrivals from England; and, when Peter Jenkins, some time after he had come to Washington as the correspondent of the *Guardian*, was commenting on the life of political journalists in America, he said: "I also miss the kind of party argument that is a part of the conversation of political journalists in London. For example, when I have an argument with Peregrine Worsthorne, he to some extent is arguing for the Conservative Party, and I to some extent am arguing for the Labour Party. There is nothing of that here. . . ." It was an acute observation, and it in part explains the feeling that one has of a lack of ballast in American political journalism, so that it too often seems to deserve Macaulay's comment on the American Constitution: "All sail and no anchor."

It certainly explains the excessive attention which some of the most influential newspapers and television network news programmes have given, during the past few years, to fringe movements in American politics, and their consequent failure to report adequately the steadiness of the centre. Again and again, in the presidential election of 1964, in that of 1968, in the mid-term elections of 1970, and now in the presidential election of 1972, the vast majority of the American people have shown that they wish to stay in the centre. Indeed, more than that, under the impact of violent swings at the extremes and on the fringes, they have remained, if such an observation will be understood in these times, enlightened in their steadiness, no backlash to the Right developing even in 1970, when Vice-President Agnew (as the saying goes) chose to "run for sheriff of the United States."

The centre, and the inclination of the majority of the people to stay somewhere within it, has to be reported in England, because there it is, day by day, visible in the House of Commons, its brute force, its "stupidity" (as Bagehot celebrated it), shifting its weight decisively within and between the two parties, and seen to shift it. Its brute force and its stupidity are there, also, in the Congress of the United States, but the party disorganisation on Capitol Hill again makes it difficult to observe and report.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY has only recently published the Godkin Lectures on *The Myths of Cabinet Government* which Richard Crossman gave there in April of 1970. They are, let one make no bones about it, brilliantly penetrating, and they fully earn, as one suspects they were intended to earn, their place beside the famous Chichele Lectures on the British Constitution given all those years ago by L. S. Amery. Richard Crossman was at the time still a member of the government of Harold Wilson, but a life-long habit of well-tempered discretion did not prevent him from making his points vigorously. And what points there were to make to an American audience!

> The key to power is *inside* the party.

Six years ago, the remark would have seemed only a commonplace to me; after six years of observing American politics, it made me sit up, and wonder at its meaning.

> How does one prevent democracy congealing into Swiss conservatism? The method we have chosen in Britain is to create outside Parliament, not the machinery of popular referendum, which nearly always stops change, but the new structure of the mass party, dynamised by the doctrine of the popular mandate.

Try and translate that into terms of the American political system.

Richard Crossman has published, after each lecture, some of the exchanges between him and members of his audiences. Many of them emphasise, in the most entertaining manner, the differences between the American and the British systems and attitudes:

> QUESTION: I'd like to ask a two-part question. (*1*) You say the party has a mandate, and Members of Parliament have to obey it. Mr. Crossman, what about the morality of the Member of Parliament voting in a way other than how he believes? . . .
>
> MR CROSSMAN: As for the first question—about the morality of the M.P. who has to vote for the programme—there is no difficulty here because the M.P., is a member of the party, and he is bound, therefore, by conference decisions. The conference builds up, year by year, the party programme. The M.P. is a fellow member of the party, has attended the conference—I agree he has no voting rights in conference, but he is allowed to attend it and watch. If he doesn't like it, he can leave the party. His first duty as a party member and Labour M.P. is to accept the constitution of the party. . . .

If one thinks in American terms, there is something really shocking in the ease of that reply, and the question was inevitably brought up again in this further revealing exchange:

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QUESTION: Senator Eugene McCarthy felt because of his view of United States policy in Viet Nam he was able to take independent political action. What independent action could a Member of Parliament take if he felt for example, he couldn't tolerate the British Government's role in Nigeria?

MR CROSSMAN: Well, he could resign.

QUESTION: What positive action could he take?

MR CROSSMAN: That is a very positive action. The most positive thing a member of the Parliamentary Labour Party can do as a protest against the Government's decision is to resign and fight a by-election on the issue. This he could do. Whether he would win is a different question, but this he could do, this is his ultimate threat. You don't have by-elections in the U.S.A.: we do. I can resign at any moment and say, "I will now fight my seat over again on this issue." That's a very positive thing I can do, and it's something which no Congressman can do. It's just an extra weapon we have which you haven't thought of.

These exchanges are worth a crate of textbooks on comparative government.

Richard Crossman might have pointed out that, although Eugene McCarthy carried his conscience before the nation in 1968, along with his other vanities, and although he broke the Democratic Party in the process, the total effect of his action was to give power to the opposing party, which then continued the war in Viet Nam for a further four years; and, if he had been speaking two-and-a-half years later, he could have made much the same point about the morality and the conscience of George McGovern and the movement which he led.

Even more effectively, he might have pointed to the reaction of the Conservative Party to, and its recovery from, the fiasco of the Suez adventure. If his audience had complained that the Suez adventure was hardly of the size or the duration of the war in Viet Nam, he could have suggested that it was possible to curtail it and its consequences with some ease precisely because of the strength and the organisation and the discipline of the central party—in this case, the Conservative Party—at Westminster.

He could then have gone on to point out that Harold Macmillan was able to conduct the retreat from Suez—in the widest sense, of a retreat from Empire—without shattering the Conservative Party and so without shattering the country. He might even have suggested—at any rate, I would have done—that there is something to be said for a party system which enabled Harold Macmillan, as one of the main promoters of the Suez adventure, to recognise the error of it, immediately to abandon it, and himself to lead the retreat and the recovery from it. Indeed, he might have suggested that, amidst all the talk of morality and conscience, Hubert Humphrey in 1968 was just the man to extricate the United States from the involvement in Viet Nam.

BUT THE HABITS AND ATTITUDES of such a party system were not available either in 1968 or in 1972, as the Democratic Party futilely threw up first Eugene McCarthy and then George McGovern in order to retreat and recover from *its* error. At least, they were not available in particular because "the opposition" within the Democratic Party was intent on purging it, not only of its error, but of anyone and everyone who was responsible for, or who had supported, that error. But, in that case, one has abandoned the whole point of having a party at all.

One could (and perhaps Richard Crossman should) have asked the American questioner what was the *positive* result of Eugene McCarthy's actions in 1968, and more recently of George McGovern's repetition of them. For one thing—and one must remember the narrowness of Hubert Humphrey's defeat in 1968—they have given Richard Nixon the opportunity to pack the Supreme Court, and so to place one of the branches of government beyond the reach of the Democratic Party for perhaps two decades. This was what was false in those who in 1968 said that between Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey there was "no difference", and sullenly refused to vote.

IT MAY NOW BE SEEN why I have concentrated on the petty judgment which George McGovern made of the attitudes of George Meany, and why I have suggested that he might have taken an afternoon to read the files of the *ADA World*. He was claiming the leadership of a great party—one of the really great parties in the Western political tradition—and he was paying almost no attention to the variety and the generosity of its impulses over the years which have caused it to do so many great things. Even the follies and the errors which he wished to correct had their root, in part, in the generosity of these impulses. In the words of Anthony Hartley, "A satisfactory account of the Kennedy policy must take into consideration the magnitude of its benevolent ambitions—one of the most impressive achievements of American positivism—as well as the fact that, like so many similar aspirations, these hopes were in part disappointed." My own emphasis might be

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slightly different, but his reminder is necessary and healthy.

It is time, before the revisionist histories of the Cold War become established myths, that someone recalled the temper of the American people, and of the Democratic Party whose leadership they confirmed in 1948. In the files of the *ADA World* itself one can find week-by-week evidence of the spontaneous outpouring of generous concern for the workless and the hungry and the wretched of post-war Europe. It had nothing to do with power-politics or reasons of state. Even whole issues of *Politics*, the wonderfully serious and wonderfully dotty journal which was sustained by the personal energy of Dwight Macdonald, were surrendered to letters from Europe thanking its readers for their parcels of food and clothing. Dwight Macdonald was engaged in prosecuting the Cold War? The idea is barmy. Turn to the journal of the League of Women Voters: the record was the same.

At the heart of it all was the strikingly generous internationalism of the trade union movement and the Social Democratic parties of that time. It should not be necessary, in order to correct a folly and an error, however grievous these may have been, to invite the trade unions and the Democratic Party and the American people to repudiate the generosity of their own spirit; and without that spirit at its best the world would be infinitely poorer and more dangerous.

THE WORLD MADE IT CLEAR that it understood this during the election. To judge by its press, countries which have for many a year been making sport of the difficulties of the United States suddenly woke to the possible meaning of George McGovern's appeal. It was all right for them to write, *"Yankee, Go Home!"*; it was not all right for an American to say, *"Come Home, America!"* That the internationalism of the American people since 1945—itself a creation of the Democratic Party, one of its tremendous achievements—should have become a part of the appeal of the Republican Party is a measure, of course, of the damage done to the Democratic Party by the war in Viet Nam; but it is a measure also, and this may too easily be overlooked, of the equal damage done to it by the "positive" action of the campaigns of Eugene McCarthy in 1968 and of George McGovern in 1972.

Unlike many people, I found much that was attractive and admirable in both of these men. They are the kind of men who should be around in any great party, needling the men of power, rather than themselves becoming men of power. (Once again one must observe that, in the British political system, they would have been able to perform a genuinely positive role as back-benchers, for which there is no equivalent in the United States.) But, once each of them struck for power, his political weaknesses (some would say his personal weaknesses) became apparent. One has to point out that, both in 1968 and in 1972, Hubert Humphrey gave not an inch to the Republican Party. He was and is (to use the cliché) a political animal, and one of the virtues of a political animal is that he knows the animal he is fighting.

Unlike many people also, insofar as I cannot keep myself aloof from American politics, I have a profound suspicion, which I believe to be well-founded, of the Republican Party and of Richard Nixon. I think that they are doing and will do many of the wrong things; that many of the right things which they are doing, they are doing for the wrong reasons; and that these wrong reasons will be found to have a heavy price. But these are questions which may be considered on another occasion, not least because there is an attempt, accompanying his victory, to create an intellectually respectable conservatism in America, which deserves serious examination, even if one decides that it is a rather unrespectable hoax.

For the moment, I wish to return to the convention of ADA in 1948, when William Green and Walter Reuther were willing to stand on the same platform, under the sponsorship of a frankly intellectual organisation within the Democratic Party. Seven years later, the first convention of the new AFL–CIO was held in New York, and Cardinal Spellman opened the proceedings by addressing the Almighty as *"O, Delegate Unseen."* It is uproariously funny, of course, even as one reads it in the official proceedings of the convention. But it also brings back memories of countless conferences of the Trades Union Congress and of the Labour Party. There is a flavour in it, the smell and the taste, of a time when well-bred and well-educated people did not patronise the simple beliefs of more simple people. In fact, they regarded them not only with affection, which might have been patronising, but also with a genuine recognition that there was some wisdom, some correction, to be learned.

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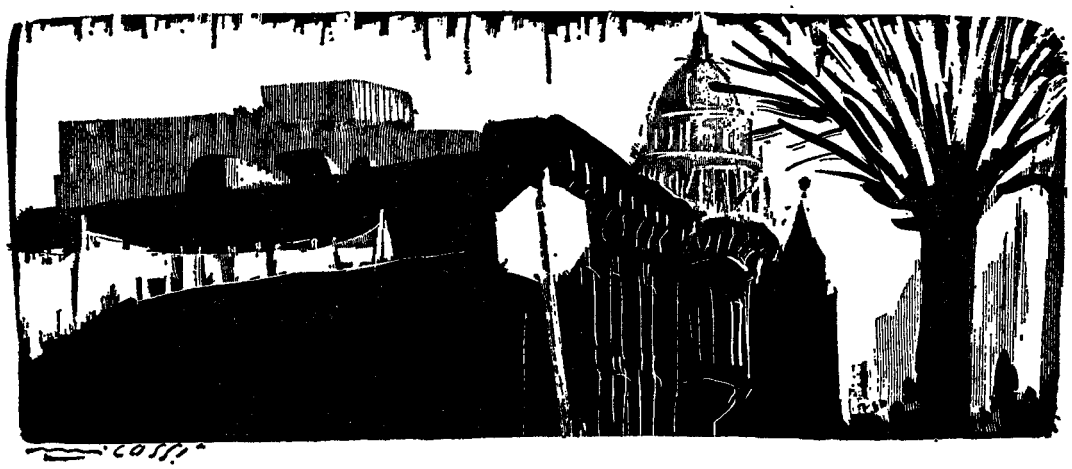
SOME OF US WHO ENJOY our opportunities to observe the politics of free societies enjoy most of all its gregarious occasions. We are suckers for its conferences and its jamborees and its conventions; we like to hear the bands playing, and the hymns being sung, and willingly surrender, at least for the moment, to the throb of a demonstration from the floor. All the millions of ordinary people who put their hearts and souls into electing other people to office, and thereby preserve our freedoms for us all, seem at once to be there in a single hall, alive and kicking; and it was characteristic of the puritanical reformers of the Democratic Party in 1972 that they reduced the number and the duration of the demonstrations to the barest minimum. In the end, as we all know, they even reduced their own nominated hero to making his acceptance speech at three o'clock in the morning.

One was even a sucker, and does not apologise for it, for the rather choppy sea of new faces who composed the national convention of the Democratic Party at Miami Beach: all those young, all those women, all those blacks, in such numbers that to be a male white adult (as someone observed) was to be a member of the largest minority in political history. Who could not lean with something of his heart and of his head towards them as they searched to make their concerns intelligible to others? But in the end, of course, and this was far more true of the women and the young than of the blacks, they were damnably mean-spirited and ungenerous and exclusive, with it all; and this seems to me the point which needs to be made.

Whatever one's personal views on the question of abortion, some of its advocates are scary, and one begins to wonder what other defenceless organisms they might be willing to remove if they got in the way of their right to "the control of their own bodies", a right which I have never been aware of either possessing or expecting. Even the attire of some of them has become, as no one would deny, something of a political factor, until I was reduced, at one graceless moment of exasperation, to inquire of a colleague whether it was necessary to throw out the bathwater with the baby. Why should one constantly have to recognise them as different?

THIS IS THE POINT at which I am driving when I talk of the inclusiveness of the appeal of Richard Nixon and the exclusiveness of that of George McGovern. I do not like seeing this advantage being thrown to the Republican Party or to Richard Nixon. But at no point did the supporters of George McGovern, and he must bear his lamb's share of the responsibility, make their own concerns seem part of the general lot of humanity of which we are all members. That was one of the achievements, because it was one of the truths, of the Social Democratic movements, as it was of socialism itself; and one must say, which is the subject of even larger considerations, that one misses socialism in the political thought of the West.

ONE OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS of the American people—just that—in the election of 1972 was that the issue of "law and order" was divorced from the issue of race. The understandable desire of people to walk the streets of their own cities in safety remained an issue, but



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it was not confused with other questions. This separation was made by the American people themselves, in particular, in the mid-term elections in 1970; and, if Richard Nixon, in his immediate talk after his victory of ending the "era of permissiveness", tries to confuse the issue again, the American people are likely to pull him back into line. One would like to think that the supporters of George McGovern will now gaze with some humility at the ordinary people around them, on the institutions which they are willing to support and the leaders whom they are willing to follow, in spite of every disappointment. One hopes that they will learn that to contain one's disappointment is not always or necessarily an abandonment of one's hopes.

IN A POEM which he must wish us to remember, since he includes it in one of his recordings, W. H. Auden talks of "our dear old bag of a democracy. . . ." That is about it: that is the tale which we have to tell of the modest little democracies of which we have no very transcendental boast to make. In fact, the whole of the poem—the Vespers in his "Canonical Hours"—might be a disputation with the supporters of George McGovern, telling them why we know they are necessary, but why we also fear them. "*O, Delegate Unseen*": what Auden could make of that!

Sporting Occasion, Korea

In a flat freezing landscape, the wind cutting their faces,
It was good to reach homely Northumberland voices
And lorries that howled in the lorry park warming up.
Newcastle United had reached the Final of the Cup
And Brigade was flying two men, briefly, home.
A corporal tuning a Bedford listened and shouted a name
Who came out wiping his hands from the Spare Parts tent
To be rightly unimpressed by this army stunt.
The other was already dead.
Reluctant
To leave the bare clay field, the warm engine noises
And, so far from home, the rooted, sceptical voices,
The messenger walked about in his brother's old officer's coat,
The wind flattening feathers in his Irish officer's hat.

In a far corner, in a bombed-out hut
Among broken bricks in the wind a young woman sat
With her breasts pulled out of her clothes nursing a child.
She made an animal noise, she half-whimpered, half-growled.
These were the first bare breasts he had seen
In his life possibly, close to. He was about nineteen.
Stopped by the sight, in his thick coat, he half stepped in.
She scuttled away on her heels, in her throat
Making that noise. He stepped quickly out.
Later he lost the coat when shot through it
And later he lost the brother. Still remembers when he'd rather not,
Pausing, before going on, to look at a titty:
Feeling lust, embarrassment and, afterwards, pity.

P. J. Kavanagh

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Melvin J. Lasky

The English Ideology (II)

"Filled with enthusiasm, in very early youth, by the promise of a better order of society, I most unwarily ventured on publication, when my judgment and taste were equally immature. . . . The revolution continued so much to occupy my thoughts, that I could not help consistently exercising my judgment on it. I could not forget it, nor shut my eyes on its events. . . .

"My changes were slow, and were still more slowly avowed. . . . Like most other men, I was not very fond of owning that I had been mistaken, or of contradicting the opinion of those with whom I lived, or of adopting any part of the doctrines of those whom I had been accustomed to oppose. . . . I often reproached myself for being prevented from speaking, as I thought, by false honour and false shame. I sometimes lamented the peculiarities of my condition which seemed to make concealment a virtue. . . .

"I can easily see that I rebounded from my original opinions too far towards the opposite extreme. I was carried too far by anxiety to atone for my former errors. In opposing revolutionary principles, the natural heat of controversy led to excess. . . .

"I therefore take it upon me to rejudge my past judgments."

SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH (1804)

5. On the Stage of History

IF THERE IS A NOTE of the melodramatic in such political conceptions, it is (as I have had occasion earlier to suggest) a consequence of the very theatricality which metaphor necessarily introduces into the forms of intellectual life. As fine phrases may be taken to act out a meaning, so do political rhetoricians appear to be performing on a special stage with lighting and sound-effects that contrast dramatically with the play of events in ordinary relationships and discourse. So far as the theatre of revolution is concerned, the English sensed it in the French, and the French sensed it in themselves. The perceptive remarks of Samuel Romilly, who after the first exciting events of 1789 "could not resist the desire of being a near spectator of them", may be offered as representative of that dawning suspicion which overtakes the civic temperament when confronted with the ambiguous realities of a revolutionary romance.

Romilly went to Paris with a letter to Necker; he made the acquaintance of Mirabeau, the Abbé de Sieyès, and the Bishop of Chartres; he heard Robespierre ("but he was then so obscure, and spoke with so little talent or success, that I have not the least recollection of his person"). His shrewd and incisive summing-up of his impression of that season when it was bliss to be alive is worth quoting, and not least because it reminds us that Tocqueville's and Flaubert's later development of this theme was not simply an exercise in national self-criticism.

> What struck me as most remarkable in the dispositions of the people that I saw, was the great desire that everybody had to act a great part, and the jealousy which in consequence of this was entertained of those who were really eminent. It seemed as if all persons from the highest to the lowest, whether deputies themselves, declaimers in the Palais Royal, orators in the coffee-houses, spectators in the galleries or the populace about the door, looked upon themselves individually as of great consequence in the revolution. The man who kept the hotel at which I lodged at Paris, a certain M. Villars, was a private in the National Guard. Upon my returning home on the day of the benediction of their colours at Notre Dame, and telling him that I had been present at the ceremony, he said, "You saw me, Sir?" I was obliged to say that I really had not. He said, "Is that possible, Sir? You did not see me! Why I was in one of the first ranks—all Paris saw me." I have often since thought of my host's childish vanity. What he spoke was felt by thousands. The most important transactions were as nothing, but as they had relation to the figure which each little self-conceited hero acted in them. To attract the attention of all Paris, or of all France, was often the motive of conduct in matters which were attended with most momentous consequences.[1]

Perhaps this touches, in the theatre of revolution, on only one small aspect of a walk-on role, a minor English glimpse of a French extra. But even Bertrand Barère, once chairman of the Revolution's Committee of Public Safety, professed himself (at least in his recollections) to

[1] *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Samuel Romilly* (1840), vol. I, pp. 106–7.

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have been upset by the sheer role-taking effrontery of all the participants on the political stage. In the wonted tribal prejudice of the day this was, however, felt not to have been a French failing but a foreign—more precisely, an English—vice. As Barère tells it, this is how a band of Paris petitioners arrived to demand the death of King Louis XVI. They were, mostly, "women and children holding and waving in their hands torn garments and strips of shirts and cloth covered with blood." Before their case was put to the Assembly (it is the year 1792) they went through "hideous preparations [which] were well calculated to grip the imagination." There was "a tumultuous movement in the galleries" as they exhibited "attitudes of grief, misery, and despair." Finally came their spokesman, an orator of stentorian voice (Barère writes here as if he himself had not been one of the Revolution's most ferocious orators)—

> His speech was full of that revolutionary energy and of that popular style which is calculated to inflame people's minds, especially when joined to the dangerous effects produced by that species of dramatic representation and by that spectacle of rags and blood-stained garments.

Barère's mind is cast back to the spectacle of Antony waving the blood-stained robe of Caesar in the Forum; and then he records that "The galleries cheered this petition with a violent unanimity which was terrifying. . . ." He claims that he tried, with calming words of his own, to work on the "pitch of agitation and public effervescence"; but to little avail.

> The Assembly seemed terrified and indignant, so revolting were these proceedings, which were suitable rather to the *English stage*.[2]

How far, then, from even the bottom-most rungs of Hazlitt's ladder to Paradise—and from Romilly's theatre of revolution and its democratisation of all roles on the stage of history, or from Barère's notion of stage-struck English habits—were those poor English souls who assembled themselves as *The Society of Friends of the People* and tried to give assurances that reform was to be not innovation but restoration, that (quoting Bacon) "Time is the greatest innovator"! The watchword of these parliamentary liberals was "temperate reform" and it was shared, as one historian records, by the flower of the young Foxite Whigs. But in the book of Jacobinical sympathisers it was only cowardly to deny that France was proving to be the model and the leader, and intolerable to turn away not merely from the passions of Paris but the politics of Paine. One modern historian of *The French Revolution in English History* manages the conventional contempt: "The position of the moderate man, anxious to wash but not to get wet, was more than usually pathetic. . . ." (When Burke was to get cholerically into the argument, so watery a metaphor would be matched by more colourful tropes: for was it not a matter of washing in blood?)

Another reformist club, the London Corresponding Society, seeking to expand its influence among working-men, reinforced the moderate cause by its disavowal of "tumult and violence." As their adopted resolution had it:

> Reason and firmness, and unanimity, are the only aims they themselves will employ, or persuade their fellow-citizens to exact, against abuse of power.

They were convinced that an honest Parliament, representing the people at large, could remove all the chief grievances of the common man. Thousands of members held meetings, distributed pamphlets, paid dues.[3] If they appeared to be more influential than in all probability they actually were, it might be because they were shrewdly following that classic precept which *agit-prop* missionaries, sooner or later, come to formulate. Here, in the artful words of John Horne Tooke to the *Friends of the People*, it was:

> . . . if you wish to be powerful, pretend to be powerful.[4]

THIS KIND OF ARTFULNESS—and wherever it took place: on the English stage, a French town square, or a Geneva theatre—was precisely what Jean-Jacques Rousseau (ironically enough, when one considers his place in the Panthéon) had wanted

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[2] Bertrand Barère, *Memoirs* (tr. Payen-Payne, 1896), vol. II, pp. 55–56 (ital. in original). This, I may note in passing, is not the last we will hear of this curious Paris intellectual habit of displacing a French affair on to a foreign stage. In its way Jean-Paul Sartre's famous play *Kean* (1954) is an illustration of this, as it sets the dawn of French existentialist philosophy into the acting milieu of 18th-century London theatre.

[3] One English historian contends: "The English societies were not copies from French models; the Jacobins, in fact, are sometimes supposed to have been founded in imitation of the London Revolution Society . . .". Brown, *French Revolution in English History*, p. 68. On the London Revolution Society, see G. S. Veitch, *Genesis of Parliamentary Reform* (1913), ch. vi.

[4] Coleridge's *Table Talk* (1 May 1832), in Brown, p. 59.

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to exclude from the new politics of Reality as against the theatrical politics of Appearance. In his famous letter of the *Citoyen de Genève* to d'Alembert in 1758, Rousseau abjured the aesthetics of deception and demanded above all authenticity and sincerity, consequently renouncing (for the good of the community) Molière as Plato had renounced Homer.

> What is the talent of an actor? It is the art of counterfeiting himself, of putting on another character than his own, of appearing different than he is, of becoming passionate in cold blood, of saying what he does not think as naturally as if he really did think it. . . .[5]

Yet, when subsequently in *The Social Contract* (1762), he had to confront, at least in the form of social theory, the real political dilemmas of a free community as it involved itself in problems of legislation, oratory and public persuasion, he found himself forced to recommend something less than transparency; indeed a strategy of unnatural prudence and even a tactic of cool dissimulation seemed to be the only available means for the end of great and good government. His precepts as drama critic yielded to the exigencies of the political act. Here, too, Rousseau's spirit cast its troubled shadow over events to come.[6]

For the theatrical temper will out. Rousseau's first plan to ban the play of dramatic instincts in its entirety proved to be short-sighted. The same deep impulses which drove men into the fictional world of stage and story would also, despite any formal attempts at cultural censorship, contribute on very special occasions to making a spectacle of their public civic life. There was little to be faulted in Rousseau's view of the social function of the drama; what he appeared to be overlooking was the dramatic function of society. I am not seeking to play with words; the relationship is in fact a dialectical one. Rousseau deplored the politics of the theatre, but he had to give way to the theatre of politics. He objected to the factors of hypocrisy and social passivity in the classic apologies for the performing art: catharsis, the purging of emotions, and the ultimate residue of heightened human values (pity, love, justice).

> In giving our tears to these fictions, we have satisfied all the rights of humanity without having to give anything more of ourselves; whereas unfortunate people in person would require attention from us, relief, consolation, and work, which would involve us in their pains and would require at least the sacrifice of our indolence, from all of which we are quite content to be exempt.

But what happens in history when the rights of humanity have to be satisfied in a non-fictional situation? when men in social crises are actually impelled to offer attention, relief, consolation, and work? when pain and not pleasure is the order of the day, and restless energy displaces all indolence?

WE HAVE TO DEAL HERE WITH theatricality and politics. In an essay of that title, Kenneth Minogue has offered a subtle and stimulating interpretation of Machiavelli's concept of *Fantasia:* and it is precisely in the operations of *fantasia* that Minogue tries to locate the perennial source of political drama.[7] Politics, he writes, is "in a deep sense an exercise in theatricality. . . . Machiavelli is a dramatist. . . . His account of political skill is primarily an account of how to play upon the passions of an audience, the first condition of whose existence is that their attention must primarily be focused upon the stage of public affairs."

What Rousseau seems to have missed, therefore, is that the politics of the theatre was only a special form of society's general involvement in the theatre of politics. For some observers this notion functions merely as a trope, a familiar analogy: if all the world's a stage, then a politician is *like* an actor, a riot *resembles* a mass scene with thousands of extras, a governmental crisis moves from climax to climax *as if* it were a drama's denouement. For others it is rather something more and different. I share with them the suspicion that the virtues and vices of *homo theatricus*, of Man the Dramatist, antedate his particular activities on any formal stage. He plays, accepts roles, gives and takes cues, accommodates himself to changing casts and a mixed repertoire, shouts and whispers and gesticulates—because he is necessarily a player. Lights and curtains and a proscenium arch can, on occasions, help for special effects; but the live show would go on without them. It remains for

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[5] J.-J. Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre* (1758; tr. Bloom, 1960), p. 79.

[6] See, especially, Maurice Cranston, "Ethics and Politics," ENCOUNTER, June 1972; and his introduction to the Penguin edition of *The Social Contract* (1762; tr. Cranston, 1968).

[7] Kenneth Minogue, "Theatricality and Politics", in *The Morality of Politics* (ed. Parekh & Berki, 1972), pp. 148–162. Allen Gilbert, in his edition of *The Letters of Machiavelli* (1961), translates *fantasia* as "imagination" (p. 97).

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the historians to reinforce this critical claim with a full documentation of human behaviour—of man's actual, literal theatricality—in the "dramatic" situations of the recorded past.

One historian of the English seventeenth century quotes the following letter, written in 1643 by a Parliamentary commander in the civil war to his Royalist counterpart:

> . . . hostility itself [writes Sir William Waller to Sir Ralph Hopton] cannot violate my friendship to your person, but I must be true to the cause wherein I serve . . . with what a sad sense I go upon this service and with what a perfect hatred I detest this war without an enemy. . . . We are both upon the stage and must act the parts . . . assigned us in this tragedy: let us do it in a way of honour and without personal animosities.[8]

Yet one could collect a thousand such suggestive documents and still not be quite sure, in the last analysis, whether one was dealing with simile or substance. That is to say, whether men in history obey some deep theatrical imperative which recurrently gives a dramatic form to their so-called normal or natural behaviour (anthropology would then be a form of dramaturgy); or whether man only acts as if his actions were being played out on the world's stage. This may well be a matter for epistemologists, philosophers of history, and metaphysicians of games theory. In any case it is a mistaken seriousness on the part of historians not to confront, at the very least, the element of play in great historical events.[9]

The whole theme, one must be prepared to concede, is subject to the limiting and distorting influences of trends and fashions. "Theatricality" often becomes an *ad hominem* term to differentiate *my* reality from *your* illusion, my seriousness from your staginess. But then, dramatic conceits have always served as a function of polemic. Recall Marx's oft-quoted epigram from the opening paragraph of *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* to the effect that great events and personages happen for the first time as "tragedy" and the second time as "farce." This was a well-turned phrase, a testy put-down of Napoleon's nephew; but as an adaptation of Hegel it was essentially meaningless. It merely indicated that Marx, the drama critic of history, knew what he liked—if an historic event merited his applause, it was an authentic drama; if he was contemptuous, then it was simply ridiculous. My performance is Shakespearean, yours is a Punch-&-Judy show. Surely a tragedy, should it repeat itself, would still be tragedy (*e.g.*, the first and second World Wars). Surely there are some events in history which happen for the first time as farce and for the second time as tragedy (*e.g.*, Hitler's first *putsch* in Munich and then again ten years later in Berlin).

Nevertheless, the very usage of such terms underscores the link between the historian's presentation of past events and his sense that there was an aspect of dramatic representation in the original unfolding. "Civilisation today is no longer played," Huizinga wrote in *Homo Ludens*, "and even where it still seems to play it is false play—I had almost said, it plays false, so that it becomes increasingly difficult to tell where play ends and non-play begins. This is particularly true of politics. . . ." But, once again, in the absence of the clearest and mutually binding definitions of what is authentically playful (or tragic, comic, farcical), then my play is true and yours is not. We may be caught here in a maze without exit, until historical research presents us with a *wertfreie* dramaturgy.

ROUSSEAU FULFILLED his own role as drama critic only in the theatre, and not in the marketplace. As a spectator (and he knew the dramatic repertory in both Paris and Geneva) he was concerned with the sociology of the formal stage and not with the psychology of the informal political spectacle such as was to take place in France, and elsewhere in Europe, not too long after his death.

> In the final accounting, when a man has gone to admire fine actions in stories and to cry for imaginary miseries, what more can be asked of him? Is he not satisfied with himself? Does he not applaud his fine soul? Has he not acquitted himself of all that he owes to virtue by the homage which he has just rendered it? What more could one want of him? That he practice it himself? He has no role to play; he is no actor.[10]

This was by no means a final accounting. Much more can, as we have seen, be asked of a man. Dissatisfied with himself and even more with the world around him, driven on by the rage in his untranquil soul, he devotes himself to rendering homage to virtue in an unprecedented public commitment. What more could one want of him? To comprehend the dramaturgy of the great

[8] Perez Zagorin, *The Court and the Country: the Beginning of the English Revolution* (1969), p. 341.

[9] See, especially, Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1938; tr. 1950); Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games* (tr. Barash, 1961); and Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). For topical recent works, see Robert Brustein, *Revolution as Theatre: Essays in Radical Style* (1971) and Ferdinand Mount, *The Theatre of Politics* (1972).

[10] Rousseau, *Letter to M. d'Alembert*, p. 25.

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revolutions of his time: to find a new role to play: to be an actor.

But this was not an easy show in which to cast an Englishman. He would, again and again, find himself repelled by the extremism of sensibility and its "rude and boisterous" unpredictability. Just as David Hume came to find his friend Rousseau more and more intolerable (for he was "a monster", black, atrocious, frenzied[11]), just so did a deep English antipathy to the exhibitionism of a theatrical personality, and to its habit of public overstatement, come to militate against ideological dramatics. It was a prejudice that was writing itself large in the national character.

6. Doubt & Disenchantment

As the course of the Revolution in France hurtled on, as faction displaced faction with each claiming to be the only defenders of the pure and true revolutionary message and "the blade of the law" taking its toll of those heads that nodded wrongly, the ranks of English moderation began to swell. To those who had been prematurely sceptical came those who were belatedly disenchanted. Except for an obdurately sentimental handful who were permanently addicted to Hazlitt's paradisiacal visions, the visionary glory lasted on a summer or two, or (for a few) a short season longer. The news of massacres and invasions was dispiriting, and gods seemed once again to be failing. In May of 1794 Samuel Romilly, the law reformer, appeared still to be holding his ground, for the Revolution was, in spite of everything, "the most glorious event, and the happiest for mankind that has ever taken place since human affairs have been recorded. . . ." He was not oblivious to the degenerate aspects of these revolutionary years but, in a distinction which would have been understood (and approved) by all kindred spirits from John Milton to Leon Trotsky, he sought to save his faith in the principle or the theory from his doubts about the practice.

> . . and though I lament sincerely the miseries which have happened, and which still are to happen, I console myself with thinking that the evils of the revolution are transitory, and all the good of it permanent.

The consolation was short-lived. By September his lamentation had reached uncontrollable proportions: "How could we ever be so deceived. . .!" He now saw only the vicious spectacle of victims and executioners, and he bitterly concluded: "One might as well think of establishing a republic of tigers in some forest of Africa as of maintaining a free government among such monsters."[12] Thereafter the glory was fled.

For others the disenchantment came a season earlier. Arthur Young, whose *Travels in France* is one of the great documents of the end of the *ancien régime* and the onset of the Revolution, recognised the intellectual difficulties and the political dangers of having to change one's mind. In his *The Example of France a Warning to Britain* (1793), he confessed: "In attempting to give expressions adequate to the indignation every one must feel at the horrible events now passing in France, I am sensible that I may be reproached with changing my politics, my 'principles', as it has been expressed. . . ." But day had turned into darkness.

> The Revolution before the 10th of August, was as different from the Revolution after that day as light from darkness; as clearly distinct in principle and practice as liberty and slavery; for the same man to approve therefore of both, he must either be uncandid or changeable; uncandid in his approbation before that period—changeable in his approbation after it. . . .[13]

As yet another liberal spokesman put it,

> I will tell you what the French have done. They have made me weep for a king of France, which I never thought to do, and they have made me sick of the very name of liberty, which I never thought to be.[14]

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[11] Hume wrote of Rousseau, after the break-up of their friendship in London: ". . . He has read very little during the Course of his Life, and has now totally renounced all Reading: He has seen very little, and has no manner of Curiosity to see or remark: He has reflected, properly speaking, and study'd very little; and has not indeed much Knowledge: He has only felt, during the whole Course of his Life; and in this Respect his Sensibility rises to a Pitch beyond what I have seen any example of: But it still gives him a more acute Feeling of Pain than of Pleasure. He is like a Man who were stript not only of his Cloaths but of his Skin, and turn'd out in that Situation to combat with the rude and boisterous Elements, such as perpetually disturb this lower World."
In another letter, Hume added: "Was ever anything in the world so unaccountable? For the purposes of life and conduct, and society, a little good sense is surely better than all this genius, and a little good humour than this extreme sensibility. . . ." E. C. Mossner, *The Forgotten Hume* (1934), pp. 152–55.

[12] *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Samuel Romilly* (1840), vol. II, pp. 2–5.

[13] *The Debate on the French Revolution*, p. 365.

[14] Brown, *French Revolution in English History*, p. 89; William Cowper to William Hayley, 29 Jan. 1793, *Correspondence of Cowper*.

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JOHN HORNE TOOKE had also come a long way from his first impression (as early as 1782) that "we were on the eve of a peaceful revolution, more important than any which has happened since the settlement of our Saxon ancestors in this country; and which will convey down to endless posterity all the blessings of which political society is capable. . . ." Slowly but surely he foreshortened the perspective of endlessness and was prepared to settle for considerably less than "all" the blessings. It was he who insisted, at a tumultuous meeting of the Revolution Society in 1790, on qualifying the enthusiastic messages of the extremists. England was not France, and Horne Tooke argued that "the English nation had only to maintain and improve the constitution which their ancestors have transmitted to them. . . ." To *maintain* and to *improve* were hardly the proper watchwords of even a peaceful revolutionary, but as he tried to explain—in a resolution which was ultimately accepted, although at first opposed "with tumult and vehemence"—each nation may well have a separate road forward and the English "have not so arduous a task to perform as the French. . . ." Still, it was a compelling task and it would not be without its dramatic difficulties, although the drama appeared to be more in the words than in the deeds. His biographer and friend recalls of Horne Tooke that "no one was ever more ready to exclaim" these lines from *Hamlet*:

> *. . . Let it work,*
> *For 'tis the sport, to have the engineer*
> *Hoist with his own petard: and it shall go hard;*
> *But I will delve one yard below their mines,*
> *And blow them to the moon!*

More than that, as the biographer goes on to record, "it was always a maxim with Mr Tooke, in the war of politics, to turn the *enemy's cannon on themselves*. . . ." One doubts whether very many—quite apart from the authorities, who were misled into fright and hysteria and put him on trial for sedition (he was acquitted)—ever took very literally this pre-Leninist counsel to turn the guns the other way.

But there was a continuing element of "sport", and the games that revolutionaries are led to play are sometimes fraught with unsporting consequences. In the years before his great State Trial in 1794 Horne Tooke was closely watched. Spies reported him, and he didn't mind talking with the reporters ("a new name, first used about this period, to diminish the odium attached to the word spy"). One such reporter received from him alarming and terrifying confidences—and was duped with tales of political melodrama.

> . . . Mr Tooke began by dropping remote hints, relative to the strength and zeal of the popular party, taking care to magnify the numbers, praise their unanimity, and commend their resolution. By degrees he descended to particulars, and at length communicated confidentially, and under most solemn promises of secrecy, the alarming intelligence, that some of the guards were gained; that an armed force was organized; and that the nation was actually on the eve of a revolution. . . .[15]

Had, then, the revolution already become a piece of fiction, a fable for fools, a tale signifying nothing?

The sport went on; others played the game: and it was Horne Tooke who was almost "hoist with his own petard." The following letter, written to him by a member of the Constitutional Society (and the tutor to the Earl of Stanhope's children), was intercepted, and absurdly enough it was taken by the uneasy Government to confirm the worst fears of an imminent insurrection.

> DEAR CITIZEN,
> This morning, at six o'clock, citizen Hardy was taken away, by order from the secretary of state's office: they seized everything they could lay hand on.—Query, is it possible to get ready by Thursday?
> *Yours,*
> J. JOYCE

The Joyce/Hardy affair led to a warrant, and Horne Tooke was arrested in Wimbledon early in the morning of 16 May 1794, and conducted to a prison cell in the Tower to await his trial for treason. (Among the others: Thomas Hardy, Thomas Holcroft, John Thelwall. All were found not guilty, and released to the cheers of a crowd outside the Old Bailey.)

The bit of cryptic prose from J. Joyce was found to mean something else altogether (something to do with "selecting from the court-calendar a list of all the places held by the Grenvilles, by way of throwing an odium on Mr Pitt, his family and his abettors"). The so-called treasury of the insurrection was discovered to have a total revenue of about sixty guineas. Even Thomas Hardy's favourite tune was not found to be very incriminating.

> *Plant, plant the tree, fair freedom's tree,*
> *Midst dangers, wounds, and slaughter,*
> *Each patriot's breast, its soil shall be,*
> *And tyrant's blood, its water.*[16]

[15] Alexander Stephens, *Memoirs of John Horne Tooke* (1813), vol. II, pp. 112–18.
[16] Stephens, *Horne Tooke*, vol. II, pp. 119, 152–3.

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Playful and high-spirited as ever, Horne Tooke offered to sing the song to the court just in case the treason might be lurking in the music. It could be that more humourlessness is required of a genuine revolutionary.

Even more resources of confidence and constant optimism are demanded than the most sanguine of reformers could steadily muster. Tooke, in rising to the defence of his life-long unswerving devotion to his original political principles, declaimed: "I might have quitted them, as Mr Secretary [William Pitt] has done, and have received the reward of my treachery. But my politics will never be changed, nor be kept back on any occasion: and whilst I have my life, it will neither be embittered by any regret for the past, nor fear for the future. . . ."[17] This is, in the chronicle of ideology, a curious and perhaps inevitable human spectacle: steadfastness allows for bravura, flexibility has a suggestion of shame and even personal defeat. It is worth noting that in this case, as in not a few others, the grand flourish of consistent inflexibility was made on the very eve of certain long-repressed changes of mood, attitude, and political principle.

Hope for change gave way to hope for a change in atmosphere in which hope for change could thrive again. In a dialogue which John Horne Tooke recorded in 1802, the new and somewhat saddened longing is clearly less for reform or revolution than for a reversal of the general trend, indeed for a new turn in "fashion".

> *F.:* Well, well. I did not mean to touch that string which vibrates with you so strongly. . . . Your political principles at present are as much out of fashion as your clothes.
>
> *H.:* I know it. I have good reason to know it. But the fashion must one day return, or the nation be undone. For without these principles, it is impossible that the individuals of any country should long be happy, or any society prosperous.[18]

The string, as is its nature, did not vibrate so strongly for long. The principles which were to guarantee both happiness and welfare were in part attenuated, in part transformed. An ageing John Horne Tooke went on to take his place as a Member of Parliament, disclosed to a perhaps surprised Commons that "I hate *innovation* in all things", argued his devotion to "established government" (although with an aside to his reforming friends, "*DO* but establish"), and saw no real inconsistencies with his past—for had he not always rejected "Paine Principles" and denounced those "ignorant men, far better calculated to pull down than build up governments"? Shortly before he died in 1812, at the age of 77, he drew up the text for his tombstone. It read: "CONTENT AND GRATEFUL".[19]

OUR ENTHUSIAST of 1790, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, who provided us at the outset with many of the major ingredients of a revolutionary rhetoric, had also within a few years clearly changed her tone, once so pure and untroubled. She was now more obviously preoccupied with the anguished problem of keeping "our hands clean"—for "ours is the blame, when the hurricane is abroad in the world, and doing its work of mischief. . . ." A beneficent storm had turned into a mischievous hurricane, but this clearly represented a change of mind and not merely of metaphor. Mrs Barbauld seemed to be groping tentatively, in her second thoughts of 1793, towards a critique of the Political Intellectual, his psychology and social function. Is there not a dangerous and irresponsible arrogance when the radical ideologue blithely assumes that he does in fact speak and act in the name of the People? Can it indeed be his true and viable role both to speak and to act, to unite theory and practice? And what of his penchant for revolutionary violence, for an impatient attempt when all seems desperate to force men to be free? She tried to explain:

> Reformers, conceiving of themselves as of a more enlightened class than the bulk of mankind, are likewise apt to forget the deference due to them. Stimulated by newly discovered truth, of which they feel the full force, they are not willing to wait for the gradual spread of knowledge, the subsiding of passion, and the undermining of prejudices. They too condemn a *swinish multitude*, and aim at an aristocracy of talents. It is indeed their business to attack the prejudices, and to rectify, if they can, the systems of their countrymen, but, in the mean time, to acquiesce in them. It is their business to sow the seed . . . to prepare, not to bring about revolutions.

It was a striking adumbration of a later century's preoccupation with the chronic political failings of the intelligentsia, with the spectacle of what would come to be known as *la trahison des clercs*. Mrs Barbauld did not hesitate to choose the people as against their self-appointed and ruinous representatives:

> The public is not always in the wrong for not giving

[17] John Horne Tooke, *Diversions of Purley* (rev. ed., 1829), vol. I, pp. 218–19n.
[18] Tooke, *Diversions of Purley*, vol. II, p. 17.
[19] Stephens, *Horne Tooke*, vol. II, pp. 243, 312n., 323, 384. Tooke, *Diversions of Purley*, vol. II, p. 486.

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> in to their views, even where they have the appearance of reason; for their plans are often crude and premature, their ideas too refined for real life, and influenced by their own particular cast of thinking: they want people to be happy their way; whereas every one must be happy his own way. Freedom is a good thing; but if a nation is not disposed to accept of it, it is not to be presented to them on the point of a bayonet.[20]

With the passing of time, and the agitations of even more tumultuous events, Mrs Barbauld made her withdrawal not merely from political action but even from public concernment. In a letter of 1814 she wrote: "I do not know what we can gather from the contemplation of all these revolutions, but this; that the concern and destinies of all the world are too high for us; that we must wait the winding up of the drama, and be satisfied in promoting and enjoying the happiness of our own little circle. . . ."[21] This mood is, as we have already seen (and will see again), part of the general atmosphere of ideological disintegration, which is almost always accompanied by a down-scaling of dedication, and not infrequently by a complete collapse of high commitment.

TOOKE, MRS BARBAULD, AND NOW JAMES MACKINTOSH: there are three distinct patterns here. If the first represents an ageing, fatigued reconciliation with the establishment of the day, and the second a world-weary, if sagacious withdrawal from spurious ideological decision-making, the third is a remarkable effort to hold fast to a revised political commitment. We are almost at the end of an aberrant ideology. And like so many post-ideological observers who, for one reason or another, find themselves withdrawing from the action and the passion, Mackintosh took his intellectual refuge in the "lessons of history."

> Of all the lessons of history, there is none more evident in itself, and more uniformly neglected by governments, than that persecutions, disabilities, exclusions—all systematic wrong to great bodies of citizens—are sooner or later punished; though the punishment often falls on individuals, who are not only innocent, but who may have had the merit of labouring to repair the wrong.

There was a touch of melancholy and of pathos here, but no more; it was a strikingly detached substitute for the fury and outrage of yesteryear.

> The French Revolution has strongly confirmed the lesson taught by the history of all ages, that while political divisions excite the activity of genius, and teach honour in enmity, as well as fidelity in attachment, the excess of civil confusion and convulsion produces diametrically opposite effects—subjects society to force, instead of mind—renders its distinctions the prey of boldness and atrocity, instead of being the prize of talent—and concentrates the thoughts and feelings of every individual upon himself—his own sufferings and fears.[22]

Perhaps these insights into the nature of utopian revolutionism strike us so forcefully (more so, indeed, than the related remarks of Burke) because they reflect more directly the "sufferings and fears" of a generation which had known its genius and honour, its fidelity and distinction and talent and mind. When it came to know its atrocity there could only follow a great ideological disintegration, and we have already seen its multifarious fragments.

Almost alone among all the disenchanted James Mackintosh had the political self-consciousness and personal self-control to maintain a certain special dignified posture in the wreckage. He tried, if fitfully, to stand erect in a place, to use his own phrase, on "the democratic side of the centre." His enlightened liberal efforts in India and his active role in putting through the Reform Bill of 1832 fulfilled his later years with (as Burke had predicted) "a great deal of service."

Eclectic reforms, sociology and psychology and, especially, philosophical meditations on the lessons of history may seem to some committed critics to be taking the easier path ahead. In all of this journey Mackintosh would appear, from the point of view of ideology—*i.e.* from the partisanship of an agitated, impassioned political moralism—to be escaping from fidelities and attachments. This may be true, but only in the sense that he had withdrawn himself from the stage of history and the theatre of revolution, from the scene-stealing and false histrionics which always accompany the playing out of such melodramatic conceptions. He tried his best to put this point quietly.

> . . . frequent changes of government, however arising, promote a disposition to acquiesce in change. No people can long preserve the enthusiasm, which first impels them to take an active part in change. Its frequency at last teaches them patiently to bear it. They become indifferent to governments and sovereigns. They are spectators of revolutions, instead of actors in them.

He now preferred another scenario. "Such revolutions, as those of England and America," he argued, only slightly troubled by the paradox

[20] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Works* (ed. Aikin, 1825), vol. II, pp. 411–12.
[21] Barbauld, *Works*, vol. II, p. 140.
[22] "On the State of France in 1815", *Monthly Review* (vol. 34), in Sir James Mackintosh, *Miscellaneous Works* (1846), vol. III, pp. 193, 201.

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of it all, were conducted with "a regard for moderation and humanity" and even with a "respect for established authorities and institutions." This, then, was the true way—

> The example of reverence for justice—of caution in touching ancient institutions—of not innovating, beyond the necessities of the case, even in a season of violence and anger. . . .[23]

But it had not been easy to put that violent and angry season behind him. Mackintosh had only been a young man of 26 when he won fame as the author of *Vindiciae Gallicae* (1791), generally held by his contemporaries to be the most effective reply to Edmund Burke (and still, in my view, the ablest ideological defence of the French Revolution ever written). In Aberdeen he had been a schoolboy enthusiast of 1776; in Edinburgh he had been influenced by Adam Smith, David Hume, Dr Robertson, Adam Ferguson; in London he immediately found himself at home in the radical circle of Horne Tooke. No, the break would not be easy when, as his own son was later to put it, "a day-dream of liberty became darkly overcast. . . ." In a letter which he screwed up enough courage to write to Burke in 1796 he still shows himself to be hesitant and of two minds.

> . . . For a time, indeed, seduced by the love of what I thought liberty, I ventured to oppose, without ever ceasing to venerate, that writer who had nourished my understanding with the most wholesome principles of political wisdom. I speak to state facts, not to flatter: you are above flattery; and, permit me to say, I am too proud to flatter even you.
>
> Since that time a melancholy experience has undeceived me on many subjects in which I was then the dupe of my own enthusiasm. I cannot say (and you would despise me if I dissembled) that I can even now assent to all your opinions on the present politics of Europe. . . .

Burke replied to Mackintosh, not without some obvious satisfaction (but not without a bit of dissembling on his own part):

> The view of a vigorous mind subduing by its own constitutional force the maladies, which that very force of constitution had produced, is in itself a spectacle very pleasing and very instructive. It is not proper to say anything more about myself, who *have been* [Burke was very ill, and was to die in 1797], but rather to turn to you who *are*, and who probably will be, and from whom the world is yet to expect a great deal of instruction and a great deal of service. You have begun your opposition by obtaining a great victory over yourself; and it shows how much your sagacity, operating on your own experience, is capable of adding to your own extraordinary talents, and to your early erudition. It was the show of virtue, and the semblance of public happiness, that could alone mislead a mind like yours. . . . As it is on all hands allowed that you were the most able advocate of the cause which you supported, your sacrifice to truth and mature reflection adds much to your glory. . . .[24]

It was Burke in a rather different mood who tried frankly to evaluate how far his eloquent adversary had come along the road to "conversion." In a letter to a friend he wrote this:

> . . . I forgot to speak to you about Mackintosh's supposed conversion. I suspect, by his letter, that it does not extend beyond the interior politics of this island; but that with regard to France and many other countries he remains as frank a Jacobin as ever. This conversion is none at all; but we must nurse up these nothings, and think these negative advantages as we can have them; such as he is, I shall not be displeased if you bring him down. . . .[25]

Mackintosh was brought down to Beaconsfield, and a personal reconciliation between two great antagonists was sealed. But the "conversion" was still far from complete. Mackintosh was not yet there when he began thinking about a new political and philosophical work, as is clear from this letter from a friend who had been with him in the *Friends of the People:*

> . . . Jemmy, I will look at my old musty folios in the library; I will look out the passage in Aristotle, and will do any thing you wish, you dog. I have something to tell you about the simplification of principles, or rather the simpleton-jargon about R-r-r-eason, and you let us do the business well. I don't mean us, but you; and, you dog, nobody can do it better; nobody, I say—not Hume, not Adam Smith, not Burke, not Dugald Stuart; and the only exception I can think of is Lord Bacon. Yet, you dog, I hate you, for you want decision. . . . Oh! Jemmy! feel your own powers; assert your dignity: out upon vanity. . . .[26]

The Bonapartist turn of events in France pushed him, finally, to a personal decision. Here were the "robbers of the revolution" at work; would "this accursed revolution be destined to be permanent"? He wrote to his friend George Moore to express his admiration for his honesty "in openly professing your conversion. . . ."

> . . . I think I shall have the courage to imitate you. I have too long submitted to mean and evasive compromises. It is my intention, in this winter's lectures, to profess publicly and unequivocally, that

[23] Mackintosh, *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. III, pp. 201–2.

[24] *Memoirs of the Life of Sir James Mackintosh* (ed. R. J. Mackintosh, 1836), vol. I, pp. 87–89. There are some minor differences in the versions of this exchange of letters (December 1796) in *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke* (ed. McDowell & Woods, 1970), vol. IX, pp. 192–5.

[25] *Memoirs of Mackintosh*, vol. I, p. 89n.; *Correspondence of Burke*, vol. IX, pp. 204–5.

[26] Letter from Dr S. Parr (1799), in *Memoirs of Mackintosh*, vol. I, pp. 105–6.

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> I abhor, abjure, and for ever renounce the French revolution, with all its sanguinary history, its abominable principles, and for ever execrable leaders. I hope I shall be able to wipe off the disgrace of having been once betrayed into an approbation of that conspiracy against God and man, the greatest scourge of the world, and the chief stain upon human annals. But I feel that I am transported by my subject to the borders of rant.[27]

How much was momentary rant and how much was mature reflection I shall leave to another place (for I mean to return to the intellectual career of Mackintosh in a separate article). Suffice it here to record that the lectures were delivered in London at Lincoln's Inn Hall during the winter of 1800, and as Hazlitt reported, "the effect was electrical and instantaneous. . . . Dazzling others with the brilliancy of his acquirements, dazzled himself by the admiration they excited, he lost fear as well as prudence—dared everything—carried everything before him. . . . The havoc was amazing, the desolation was complete. As to our visionary . . . Utopian philosophers, they stood no chance with our lecturer; he did not 'carve them as a dish fit for the gods', but hewed them as a carcass fit for hounds."[28] Hazlitt also noted that William Godwin himself had come to hear what new light had broken in upon his old friend. "Poor Godwin . . . was obliged to quit the field, and slunk away after an exulting taunt thrown out at 'such fanciful chimeras as a golden mountain or a perfect man'. . . ."

[27] Letter to Moore (1800), in *Memoirs of Mackintosh*, vol. I, pp. 124–5.

[28] William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age* (1825; ed. Mackerness, 1969), pp. 155–6.

[29] Mackintosh was much encouraged by the European-wide scope of the process of ideological disenchantment. In a letter from Bombay in December 1804, he wrote: "I have lately read the lives, and private correspondence of some of the most memorable men in different countries of Europe who are lately dead. Klopstock, Kant, Lavater, Alfieri—they were all filled with joy and hope by the French revolution—they clung to it for a longer or a shorter time—they were all compelled to relinquish their illusions. The disappointment of all was bitter, but showed itself in various modes, according to the variety of their characters. . . ." *Memoirs*, vol. I, p. 129.

As I have indicated, I will be returning in a sequel to a fuller analysis of Mackintosh and "comparative ideology"; for he represents, in my view, the first self-conscious protagonist in the modern drama of disenchantment from utopia and revolution. There were, as he notes, "various modes"; but in his own personal case the intensity and the incisiveness of his introspection make him a notable pioneering spirit. Not until the confessional literature of hope and bitterness in connection with the Russian Revolution has there been so subtle and valuable a delineation of the role of moral faith and intellectual self-deception in the maintenance of ideological illusions.

THERE WERE MOMENTS during his years in far-away India when Mackintosh seemed to be deeply reluctant, even nervously so, to think back to the great French themes, to his own vision of a golden mountain and a perfect man.

A diary item for March 1811 (Bombay) has only this brief remark: "It is now about twenty years since I published my answer to Burke. It was not a brilliant dawn, but it promised a better day; we are now in the afternoon." The rather infelicitous, and in any case banal, analogy appeared to be sufficient political reconsideration for the moment. And when a contemporary of his, Thomas Green, published in his own *Diary* an account of Mackintosh's conversations, there was positive annoyance. Nor did he hide the reasons for his being "more dissatisfied than flattered." He feared that this would constitute "one more proof of the various states of political feeling successively produced in my mind by the French revolution. This will be regarded as a new proof of my inconsistency in the judgment of the vulgar. . . ." After his public confession of conversion in London in 1800, how is it that he was still reluctant to display such candour? Again, in England a few years later, he noted taciturnly that in a number of the *Yellow Dwarf* ("a democratical weekly paper, printed at two pence"), he had found "strong quotations from the *Vindiciae Gallicae*, and many compliments to my former talents, contrasted with my present opinions and powers." He was, perhaps, not yet prepared to surrender that glowing image of the angry young man of the 1790s.[29]

The *Vindiciae Gallicae*, although in its way the greatest single moment in his life, had slowly with the years become something of an albatross. What reply could Mackintosh have mustered up for Napoleon Bonaparte when the First Consul, as he then was, asked to see him in Paris? Would it have been, "Sire, I am no longer a defender of your faith"? For Napoleon had intended to pay him "many compliments upon his reputation as a writer, and particularly as the author of *Vindiciae Gallicae*. . . ." But as it happened, in a crowded room, Napoleon confused the various introductions to his English guests and the ambivalent compliments were paid to the wrong man; Mackintosh was spared both the praise and the embarrassment. There was something symbolic about the cross-purposed confusion in this encounter between the French Revolutionary and the English Ideologue, the one proud of

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principles he no longer truly represented, the other ashamed of principles he could no longer maintain.[30]

ALL IDEOLOGUES have a mortal fear of the dreadful charge of inconsistency—of apostasy, defection, and renegadism—that lurks implicit in any attempt to reconsider a strong state of political feeling or to revise a basic tenet of doctrinal belief. Is it possible, even if it were desirable, always to persevere? What secret, seductive human merit is there in the spectacle of a sage of firm, changeless convictions? Does God's angry man, in standing there and doing no other, suggest some steadfast perfection in an otherwise mutable and corrupting world?

Both aspiration and anxiety are involved in this aspect of the ideological psyche. The factor of hope—the deep longing for firm, undeviating, even inert rectitude—is associated with a related component of fear: the fear of betrayal, weakness, of selling out. Here we can detect traces of that trauma of all spirits in Christendom, the Judas syndrome: going over to the other side, to the oppressors and crucifiers, or (in later, more secular dramas) the aristocrats and the class enemy. Given the aspiration of a revolutionary ideology to a total coherence, which is held together emotionally by an inner frame of high confidence and enthusiasm, then each little doubt and passing mood of hesitation becomes devious and dangerous. Thus, Holcroft is upset to the point of painful consternation when he hears in 1798 of Mackintosh's plans for his series of London lectures. We must recall that for men of Holcroft's and Godwin's indestructible faith in progress, these were the years in which the Utopia of perfectibility had seemed very imminent indeed. Godwin's notion of a harmonious "law-less society" appeared practical, desirable, and around the corner. Holcroft finds a passage in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* which, as he records in his diary, leaves him "highly gratified"—it referred to a possible condition of human life, to "a state of reciprocal benignity in which laws shall be no longer necessary. . . ." It can therefore be imagined with what shock the signs of Mackintosh's apparent defection would be observed. The alarm is sounded about a possible apostate, as in this passage in Holcroft's diary:

> . . . I learn *Mackintosh* intends to read lectures on law; in which political government is to be introduced, and the established systems of this country highly praised. Expressed the pain I felt, that a man of such superior powers should act so false a part, and so contrary to his convictions, of which I must, in all human probability, be able to form a tolerably accurate opinion, from the many conversations I have had with him. His judgment was (and doubtless, still is, for his faculties are in their full vigour) so clear, his perceptions so penetrating, and his opinions so decided, that I can conceive no possibility of their being so totally changed. . . .[31]

This general problem and poignant ordeal—of changing one's opinions, mixing praise and dispraise of a so-called system, playing a true part—kept gnawing away at Mackintosh's intellectual equanimity.

> . . . A degree of wisdom is certainly conceivable, which would have reached principles and habits of feeling so comprehensive as to have adapted themselves to every succeeding convulsion without change, and of course without excess; but probably no man in Europe had attained this exalted perfection. The consistency of the far greater number arose either from ignorance, from obstinate party spirit, from blind enthusiasm, from fear of the shame of inconstancy, and from motives of policy still more sordid. In the three former it was irrational, in the two latter it was insincere. . . .

"If I had," Mackintosh concludes modestly, and thus nicely postponing the matter for another day, "Lord Bacon's power of illustration I could make clear my own middle position between the sage and the multitude. . . ."[32] We will be hearing

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[30] *Memoirs of Mackintosh*, vol. II, pp. 95, 148–9, 287, 238. Thomas Green, *Extracts from The Diary of a Lover of Literature* (1810), pp. 139–40.

[31] William Hazlitt, *The Life of Thomas Holcroft* (1816; ed. Colby, 1925), vol. II, pp. 235–6.

[32] *Memoirs of Mackintosh*, vol. II, p. 149.

There is a vivid impression of Mackintosh in Thomas Carlyle's *Journal*. It was the last year of Mackintosh's life (1832), and Carlyle saw him and heard him—they never spoke—at a party in London.

"On Saturday saw Sir James Mackintosh (at Jeffrey's), and looked at and listened to him, though without speech. A broadish, middle-sized, grey-headed man, well-dressed, and with a plain courteous bearing; grey intelligent (unhealthy yellow-whited) eyes, in which plays a dash of cautious vivacity (uncertain whether fear or latent ire), triangular unmeaning nose, business mouth and chin; on the whole, a sensible official air, not without a due spicing of hypocrisy and something of pedantry, both no doubt involuntary. The man is a Whig philosopher and politician, such as the time yields, our best of that sort, which will soon be extinct. He was talking mysteriously with other 'Hon. Members' about 'what was to be done'—something *à la* Dogberry the thing looked to me, though I deny not that it is a serious conjunction . . . only believe that change has some chance to be for the better, and so see it all with composure." James Anthony Froude, *Thomas Carlyle* (1882), vol. II, pp. 205, 282.

So even Carlyle, in his complex cantankerous way, could lend a sympathetic ear to Mackintosh's campaign for reform, and be persuaded of both its urgency and hopefulness. Remarkably enough, Mackintosh had succeeded in his vow, of thirty years earlier, to avoid rebounding from his disillusionment with Revolution "towards the opposite extreme", indeed to maintain a position "on the democratic side of the centre."

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more from him and his contemporaries about this middle position.

7. *Disenchantment & Resurrection*

THE CONSEQUENCES OF liberal disenchantment, in terms of practical politics, were disastrous. This was clear to all except the unfortunate French, for revolutionaries hear (and need to hear) only those voices that keep their spirits high, and persist in magnifiying the faintest echoes of lingering encouragement. In Paris they were convinced that England was soon to follow along the trail they had blazed. Imprisoned in their own optimism they mis-read all the signs from across the Channel. The French Ambassador (or perhaps it was his secretary, Talleyrand) warned the optimists: "They curiously deceive themselves who regard England on the eve of a revolution. . . ." No, England was on the eve of reaction, and the English liberal ranks were left in disarray by a combination of their own confusion and Pitt's effective campaign against them as "wicked advocates of subversion." In October 1794 Romilly reported from London to a correspondent in France his estimate of the bitter balance:

> There are indeed many persons here who wish a total overthrow of our constitution, and many more who desire great changes in it; but the great majority of the nation, and particularly the armed part of it (which is at present a very large portion, for volunteer regiments have been raised in every county), are most ardent zealots for maintaining our constitution as it is, and disposed to think the reform of the most palpable abuse, which has been of long continuance, as a species of sacrilege.

Zealotry in any ideological camp appears to have only a half-life; it tends to complete its brief, intense run by making a zig-zag shift from one side to the other. The liberal and radical reformers, themselves once full of ardour, were overwhelmed by what another age would come to call a "back-lash" (only a new word for an old phenomenon of rhythm in political tension). Romilly, taking a few years later another reading of the prospects for humane changes which once seemed so hopeful, registered an English spirit of conservatism which now bordered on savage reaction:

> If any person be desirous of having an adequate idea of the mischievous effects which have been produced in this country by the French Revolution and all its attendant horrors, he should attempt some legislative reform, of humane and liberal principles. He will then find, not only what a stupid dread of innovation, but what a savage spirit it has infused into the minds of many of his countrymen.[33]

The back-lash left the cause of reform dead.

The indomitable optimism of a handful of last-ditch radical spirits received blow after blow. In 1809 the Earl of Selkirk tried to explain to Major Cartwright, with whom he had been associated in so many struggles, why this time he had to turn down the request for him to join together with the Friends of Parliamentary Reform. One thing he underscored again and again and tried to make unquestionably clear: he had not changed his humane principles nor abandoned his critical sense of society's shortcomings.

> . . . I am very far from thinking that there is nothing which requires reform in our government. I am well convinced, that there are many corruptions of most pernicious tendency, which may and ought to be eradicated.[34]

But the times were no longer propitious, and a whole generation may well have lost the historic opportunity which had once seemed so bright.

> . . . But we have to consider how that object is to be effected, without endangering benefits of still greater importance. The advocates of a radical and entire Reform, have not perhaps fairly considered the extreme difficulty of guarding every avenue to abuse, and how often the measures which are taken for repressing it in one quarter, serve only to open it for some new channel still more pernicious.

How could one, then, move forward without risking the achievements of previous efforts? There was much corruption and many hardships, but the struggle for "public happiness" had issued in no little victories on behalf of "the personal liberty of the subject", of justice and security.

> . . . Let the value of that which we possess be fairly appreciated; and then let us consider coolly, whether the blemishes of our government are of such magnitude, as to warrant the application of remedies, which, if they do not cure, may kill.

Selkirk was, of course, referring to the heritage of a revolution in France which had gone astray. 1789 had established the foundations of "a gradual improvement", but "slow progress, however, did not suit the ideas of the ardent friends of liberty." They sought an "immediate and complete regeneration . . . in pursuit of a phantom of ideal perfection." But this was, by now, an old

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[33] Romilly, *Memoirs*, vol. II, pp. 45, 253.

[34] Earl of Selkirk, *A Letter addressed to John Cartwright, Esq. . . . on the Subject of Parliamentary Reform* (London, 1809), pp. 1–22.

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story. Selkirk was a sophisticated liberal and tried to keep away from the familiar debate ("I shall not repeat the hackneyed topics to which the French Revolution has given occasion. . . .")

Yet behind the caution, hesitation, and coolness which he was recommending was the hardening English fear of ideology.

> Though I do not suppose that the English Reformers would imitate the mad fury of the French Revolutionists, their principles have the same tendency, and their efforts may have in a great measure the same effect. Popular ferment is a two-edged weapon, which most frequently inflicts the wound where it was not aimed. Often it has ruined the cause of liberty, and seldom contributed to improve the condition of mankind! Before we risk the infinite mischief, which may be dreaded from the use of such an engine, let us weigh well the value of the object. . . .

Yet no scales were available (nor are they today) to measure accurately all the factors that have to be weighed, to do a balanced social accounting of the costs of political and economic change. Selkirk's recourse was the classical one of trying to chart an ancient course between Scylla and Charybdis. For the issue, as he saw it, was between *the vices of an ultra-democratic demagogy* ("power into the hands of men, whose only merit consists in being masters of stage effect, and the tricks of popular delusion") and *the evils of plutocracy* ("the undue influence of wealth"). He and Cartwright were still of one mind and heart about the abuses to be eradicated; and these included economic as well as political vices. But the times, as I hope to have made abundantly clear, had induced a failure of nerve. Selkirk would soon leave to cross the Atlantic and make a new and adventurous career for himself in the Canadian Northwest; but this was his message for his contemporaries who were still caught in the old toils of English post-revolutionary public affairs:

> A struggle for Parliamentary Reform would come at the present moment most seasonably to the aid of the Anti-jacobin hypocrites, who are trembling for their ill-gotten gains. . . . I would entreat the advocates of Parliamentary Reform, to reflect how many men there are who, though prepared to support every substantial oecumenical Reform, would tremble at the idea of Constitutional changes, to which they can see no termination. If the notions of a radical and entire change are pursued with violence, moderate men will again be forced to believe, that there is no alternative between measures of a Revolutionary tendency, and a resistance to every reformation whatever.

It was a confrontation between revolution and counter-revolution that he sought at all odds to avoid, the polarisation between left and right, between the old and the new.

> Many sincere friends of oecumenical Reform may thus be driven to a cooperation with men, who have no principle but to support every established abuse.
>
> Anxiously do I hope, that those who wish honestly to pursue the good of the country, may not again be forced to make their option between Jacobin and Anti-jacobin. I am no Alarmist; but as I firmly believe, that amidst violent changes, there is more probability of making our government worse than better, I deprecate the discussion to which you wish me to lend my name, as calculated to divide the friends of substantial reformation, and to defeat every valuable, safe, and attainable improvement in the management of our public affairs.

I HAVE ALREADY REFERRED to Hazlitt's entrancing vision of a paradisaical human happiness, but unlike so many of his contemporaries he needed no prodding from events to recognise (with sobriety and without bitterness) how it would end.

> The love of truth and virtue which seems at all times natural to liberal-minded youth, was at this time carried to a pitch of enthusiasm, as well by the extraordinary events that had taken place, as by the romantic prospects of ideal excellence which were pictured in the writings of philosophers and poets.

Alas, neither youth nor philosophy nor poetry prevailed. Imagination could not take power for, as Hazlitt wrote, "Imagination was unable to keep pace with the gigantic strides of reason, and the strongest faith fell short of the supposed reality. . . ." Yet his balance-sheet of the spirit of the age was not one-sided. Ideals, even when they fail or are betrayed or in some perverse manner pervert the idealists themselves, have a certain historic merit.

> This anticipation of what men were to become, could not but have an influence on what they were. The standard of morality was raised high: and this circumstance must excite an ardent emulation in the minds of many persons to set an example of true and disinterested virtue, unshackled by the prejudices or interests of those around them.

Yet if, in the moral accountancy, the idealism of a revolutionary epoch might "add new force to the practice of virtue in the liberal and well-disposed mind", in the actual course of events it was the practice of vice in illiberal and ill-disposed minds which made for the political tragedy.

> The curb of prudence was taken off; nor was it thought that zeal for what was right could be carried to an excess. There is no doubt that this system would be taken advantage of by the selfish and the hypocritical to further their own views at the expense of others.

For Hazlitt's generation, as for so many others before and after him who have lived through (in the Chinese phrase) "interesting times", both the moment of illusion and of disillusion seemed to

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be, each in their own bright and dark way, permanent. But the historian, trapped in his own mental forms, can only record, again and again, the transitoriness of the hope and the despair.

> Kind feelings and generous actions there always have been and there always will be, while the intercourse of mankind shall endure: but the hope, that such feelings and such actions might become universal, rose and set with the French Revolution. That light seems to have been extinguished for ever in this respect. The French Revolution was the only match that ever took place between philosophy and experience: and waking from the trance of theory to the sense of reality, we hear the words, *truth, reason, virtue, liberty*, with the same indifference or contempt, that the cynic who has married a jilt or a termagant, listens to the rhapsodies of lovers.[35]

As we shall see, the words will return, and the loving rhapsody will recur. There are a whole series of matches between philosophy and experience which are still to come, for few "lights" in history are extinguished "for ever." Between the trance of theory and the sense of reality there will be many a human awakening, yet again.

THE CENTRAL AXES along which the ideological cycle can be observed are, usually, *location* and *motion*. In its late phase the main points to be plotted are: Centre or extreme, Stability or chaos. But in its early phase a reading of the cycle includes: Movement or static balance, Radical progress or immobile moderation.

On both counts Jeremy Bentham's pamphlet of 1817 on "the necessity of radical, and the inadequacy of moderate, reform" represents a prophetic foreshadowing of the turning-point of 1832 which can be taken as ending the late phase of post-Revolutionary centrism and moderation and renewing the mood of action, hope, and militance.

The first point Bentham disposes of in the following vigorous paragraph:

> Talk of *balance*: never will it do: leave that to Mother Goose and Mother Blackstone. Balance! balance! Politicians upon roses—to whom, to save the toil of thinking—on questions most wide in extent, and high in importance—an allusion—an emblem—an anything—so as it has been accepted by others, is accepted as conclusive evidence—what mean ye by this your *balance*? Know ye not, that in a machine of any kind, when forces *balance* each other, the machine is at a stand? Well, and in the machine of government, immobility—the perpetual absence of all motion—is that the thing which is wanted? Know ye not that—since an emblem you must have—since you can neither talk, nor attempt to think, but in hieroglyphics—know you not that, as in the case of the body *natural*, so in the case of the body *politic*, when motion ceases, the body dies?

Once again, it was a case of one man's high principles being another man's hieroglyphics. An ideological debate, for all its allusiveness, is never merely about "emblems"; as in Bentham's own work, it raged around real social values, privileges of power and property, democratic rights and liberties. But the imperious choice of words and metaphors is, as we have seen, no less real; language was a necessary comfort, and the properly congenial vocabulary serves as a source of strength and enhanced faith. *Movement* was progress; *balance* was stagnation. (Conversely: motion tended to a wildness which disrupted and ruined delicate social arrangements; only at the centre could things be held together.) *Radicalism* was effective; *moderation* was inadequate. (Or: a radical uprooting or subversion of faulty institutions does, "on balance", more harm than good; decent and lasting changes are effected only "little by little.") Bentham's own temperamental predisposition was clear and confident:

> . . . what is required is—from all the several arrangements in question, to show—this having been the result of the inquiry—that while, by *radical* reform, a remedy, and that an adequate one, would be applied—by *moderate* reform, no remedy would be applied, or next to none.

Still, this represented in the radical English mind of the next generation (from Bentham to John Stuart Mill) something rather less than a full return to a revolutionary commitment. Bentham, in one of his unpublished manuscripts, had hastened to draw a line of caution where the men of '89 had rushed into the excesses of Jacobinical enthusiasm. *Radicalism Not Dangerous* was the title of his proposed pamphlet. But a revolutionary revels in the danger, for the risk is only an historic sign that something great, necessary, fundamental and audacious is being undertaken.[36]

We are dealing here with the profound distinction between English radicalism and European revolutionism which came to mark utopian thinking ever since the brief, ill-starred flirtation with ideology on the part of the generation of '89.

[35] William Hazlitt, *The Life of Thomas Holcroft* (1816; ed. Colby, 1925), vol. II, pp. 92–93.

[36] Jeremy Bentham, *Plan of Parliamentary Reform, in the Form of a Catechism, with Reasons for Each Article: with an Introduction, showing the necessity of Radical, and the Inadequacy of Moderate, Reform* (1817) and *Radicalism Not Dangerous* (mss. 1819–20) in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (ed. Bowring, 1843), vol. III, pp. 450, 452, 599.

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It was a distinction which was nowhere better and more succinctly formulated than in a letter John Stuart Mill had written after the Paris Commune of 1871. It was addressed to a working-class militant from Nottingham, Thomas Smith, who was a member of Marx's First International and a defender of the recent "mighty Convulsions in the Martyr City of Liberty." Smith had sent Mill a copy of his pamphlet entitled *The Law of the Revolution*, and I quote Mill's critique not least because one of the central themes of these articles—Anglo-French differences and the character of English thought, the ideological role of "vague words" and "unreal abstractions" under the banner of "the Revolution"—can be taken by the reader as little more than an historical explication of this fine passage.

Mill found, generously enough, little to dissent from and much to approve in the radical principles of the International. He was especially pleased with the "full and thoroughgoing recognition . . . of the claims of women to equal rights in every respect with man" and also "of minorities, proportionally to their numbers, with majorities." But one thing troubled him: the "generality" with which all the principles were laid down, so that it was impossible for him to say "to what extent I should concur in the political measures which the Association would propose in order to bring the principles into operation." Two may say the same things but can mean different; like Milton and Harrington, Hartlib and Worthington, Rogers and Cromwell, or like Burke and Mackintosh, Cartwright and Horne Tooke, Southey and Shelley, two may appear to be travelling the same high road but can soon come to a parting of the ways, and for reasons which were at the outset barely discernible in the words and almost inconceivable. Mill was rightly disturbed by the "phraseology."

> . . . What advantage is there in designating the doctrines of the Association by such a title as "the principles of the political and social Revolution"? "The Revolution" as a name for any sort of principles or opinions, is not English. A Revolution is a change of government effected by force, whether it be by popular revolt or by military usurpation. And as "the man" in English always means some particular man, so "the Revolution" means some particular revolution, such as the French Revolution, or the English Revolution of 1688.

Mill began with semantical objections but went on to a fuller dissent:

> The meaning intended to be conveyed by "the principles of the Revolution" can only be guessed at from a knowledge of French, in which language it seems to mean the political ideal of any persons of democratic opinions who happens to be using it. I cannot think it is good to adopt this mode of speech from the French. It proceeds from an infirmity of the French mind, which has been one main cause of the miscarriages of the French nation in its pursuit of liberty and progress; that of being led away by phrases, and treating abstractions as if they were realities which have a will and exert active power. Hitherto the character of English thought has been different; it has required propositions, not vague words, which only seem to have a meaning. There is no real thing called "the Revolution", nor any "principles of the Revolution." There are maxims which your Association, in my opinion, rightly consider to be essential to just government, and there is a tendency increasing as mankind advances in intelligence and education towards the adoption of the doctrines of just government. Those are all the facts there are in the case, and the more clearly and unambiguously these, and nothing but these, are stated, the better people will understand one another, and the more distinctly they will see what they are disputing about, and what they are concerned to prove. When instead of this men range themselves under banners as friends and enemies of "the Revolution", the only important question which is just and useful is kept out of sight, and measures are judged not by their real worth but by the analogy they seem to have to an irrelevant abstraction.

Mill was not making a point so peculiarly English that it would have been lost on France's own critics of abstract revolutionism, on (say) Constant or Tocqueville. Indeed Mill was very pleased with the "very salutary intercourse" which had grown up across the Channel (especially "between portions of the English and the French working classes"), but he was afraid that it would be "dearly paid for if it causes the advanced politicians of this country to abandon one of the best characteristics of the English mind, and replace it by one of the worst of the French. . . ."[37]

GREAT SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN HISTORY are rarely explained by the ideas, sound or illusory, with which they are associated; and their defeats or failures can scarcely be attributed in any simple manner to their emotional naïveté, their temperamental self-indulgence, or their ideological contradictions. I am merely calling attention to the persistence of these factors in the agitated chronicles of utopians and revolutionaries.

We seem almost to know, as if the study of history were providing us with cues, what is going to happen. The historian can neither wish it nor deplore it, as if in any case he could re-write what once has been writ. But surely some measure

[37] Thomas Smith, *The Law of the Revolution* (1872), in *The English Defence of the Commune 1871* (ed. Harrison, 1971), pp. 261–70. *The Letters of John Stuart Mill* (ed. Elliot, 1910), vol. II, pp. 346-8.

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of understanding history is the sense of confirmed expectation which haunts the historian as he searches for an order of meanings in the new and old débris of great events. In the débris of the revolutionary interlude in the liberal English mind which I have been trying to summarise, we can discern a familiar pattern of post-ideological sadness: a melancholy complex made up of guilt, self-criticism, withdrawal, and escape. Reformers and radicals abused themselves for their own inadequacies; Thelwall regretted that they had wasted so much of their efforts in "wrangling." They vaguely sensed that perhaps the very romantic extravagance of their hopes and emotions had led to a cyclical turn to inertia and despair. As Sir Philip Francis, a good observer, informed that old militant, Major Cartwright,

> As far as I can judge, the mass of the English population is inert. The country has lost its passions and is not fit for action.

Nobody less than that heroic radical spirit of the 1790s, John Horne Tooke, confirmed the collapse of hope: "I think the cause of reform is dead and buried." But in the margin of this letter John Cartwright penned a characteristically irreverent dissent: "But J. C. is a believer in the resurrection."[38]

That this "resurrection" of the cause of reform would in fact come; that the passions were not lost forever, and that this inertia too would pass, is another matter, indeed a matter for another chapter. In the long run the wheel of fortune would turn again; but in the long run this generation, so grandiloquent in its aspirations and so chastened by murderous events, would be dead. A few knew it in their bones, held by some to be no bad repository for human hope, that a time would come again. When, in the spring of 1801, Major Cartwright met his friend Wilberforce in the London street and exchanged a few words of greeting and encouragement, Wilberforce said he "hoped we should meet in a better world. . . ." Whereupon (as Cartwright wrote to his wife, italicising his articles of faith), "I answered, that *'I hope we should first mend the world we were in'*. . . ."[39]

THE WORLD HAS NEED of its menders, and the menders no less a need of faith in mission and purpose. That it sometimes requires a whole new generation to recover the nerve for utopian revolution seems to them only another reason for steadfast patience. That the new utopians and revolutionaries, eyes fixed on another glorious vision of the future and the daring deeds which would accomplish them, never have the historical sense to look backward, would seem to us to be only another reason to tell yet again another familiar story. For as Southey confessed, when he looked at Shelley as at the ghost of his own youth, "He is just what I was in 1794. . . ."[40]

Almost a quarter of a century had passed since the first English enthusiasts had greeted the destruction of the Bastille, and in those years sensitive and ardent spirits of two full English generations had been touched by "visions of human perfectibility, and of a golden age of equality and innocence and joy. . . ." In Shelley, as a biographer records of the year 1812, Southey fancied that he beheld the image of his own revolutionary youth revived from the past. "At present," Southey observed (with only the slightest trace of irony), "he has got to the Pantheistic state of philosophy." He expected that his young friend would shortly become a Berkeleyan, "for I have put him upon a course of Berkeley." Southey assured Shelley that he understood him perfectly and justly, that "all the difference between us is that he is nineteen and I am thirty-seven. . . ."

Generational sympathies touched for a moment. Shelley was taken with Southey's great eloquence and candour; Southey was kind to Shelley, helpful with money and with books. But the perfect understanding was short-lived. Shelley turned from Southey ("Now he is corrupted by the world, contaminated by custom") to a purer source of revolutionary vitality, to Godwin; and it was to Godwin that he announced: "I have but just entered on the scene of human operations. . . . I am young: I am ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth. . . ." Southey was never more perceptive than when he saw in the youthful Shelley the image of his own early utopianism. "God help us!" he wrote: "The world wants mending, though he did not get about it exactly in the right way. . . ."

It was indeed an uncanny insight into the ideological gap between generations. "Here is a man who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794. . . ."

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[38] Brown, *The French Revolution in English History*, p. 153. *Life of Cartwright*, vol. II, p. 4. *Life of Cartwright*, vol. I, p. 240.

[39] *Life of Cartwright*, vol. I, p. 300.

[40] Edward Dowden, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1909), vol. I, pp. 103–7.

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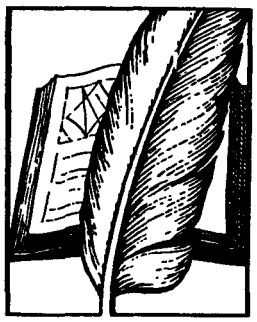

Column

THE ADVERTISEMENTS tell us that the *Evening Standard* is "What Living in London is All About," just as, long ago, in Eliot's early poem, the *Evening Transcript* was what life in Boston was about.

The readers of the Boston Evening Transcript
Sway in the wind like a field of ripe corn.
When evening quickens faintly in the street,
Wakening the appetites of life in some
And to the others bringing the Boston Evening Transcript,
I mount the steps and ring the bell, turning
Wearily, as one would turn to nod good-bye to La Rochefoucauld,
If the street were time and he at the end of the street,
And I say, "Cousin Harriet, here is the Boston Evening Transcript."

I have no doubt that many thousands of Londoners, even though they may never have heard of La Rochefoucauld, return home in the evening, wearily, having fought their way out of tubes and buses, in exactly the same mood as Eliot and certain that Cousin Harriet, or whoever it is, will welcome their offering of the *Evening Standard* (though one should not forget that many more will get the *Evening News*). The point about the *Standard* is that it consciously and deliberately tries to present Londoners with an image of their great city as if it were a village, in which everyone knows everyone else, and everyone enjoys each other's pleasures and rejoices in their disasters. I am not sure that this image is in any kind of way a truthful one. It may be no more than a myth, or a gimmick, but even so I would think it a useful and beneficent one if it contributes in any way to making Londoners think that they are, after all, inhabitants of no mean city.

If it does, this is very largely the work of Charles Wintour, who has edited the *Evening Standard* for the last thirteen years, and has now published a book, *Pressures on the Press* (André Deutsch, £3.50), which is a kind of distillation from his very distinguished journalistic career. The first thing one would like to say about it is that it is a very good book indeed, and if any aspiring young journalist wants to learn how to write simply and clearly, so that he who runs may read, while at the same time conveying the maximum amount of information, he should take it as a model. I regret to say, however, that even so meticulous an editor as Mr Wintour, both of himself and of others, is capable of using plural subjects with singular verbs. This is something he would not forgive in his staff, and he should apply to himself the same severe strictures that, I have no doubt, he would apply to them if they were to commit in print the same heinous offence. But this is only to say that even Homer nods.

MR WINTOUR'S BOOK, however, has another merit as well as that of being very well written. It is also about a very important subject, which is the various restrictions and regulations which, at the present time, combine to restrict the freedom of the Press in this country. I feel sure that it is not necessary for me to say that, in a democracy, anything that limits the liberty of the Press is to be deplored, and equally, that some such limitations are inevitable and necessary, because the Press has no more right to an absolute freedom than any other institution. A totally unrestricted Press would constitute a special kind of tyranny of its own, of a peculiarly repulsive kind; I feel quite sure that Mr Wintour would agree with this.

His book, however, is particularly good in its analysis and examination of the particular restrictions on Press freedom which, in this country, inhibit an honest and conscientious journalist in trying to carry out his professional duty; in showing, as it were, where the shoe really rubs, for it is one of the merits of his book that it treats the liberty of the Press not as one of the Big Words which have lost their meaning as a result of endless and meaningless repetition, but as something which an ordinary journalist has to try and realise in his daily life and work, in spite of the many pressures which inhibit him from doing so. In analysing these pressures, Mr Wintour manages to convey a picture which is both exact and vivid of what a journalist's job really is, or ought to be.

What, then, are those pressures? They are patiently identified and enumerated: competition for sales and its concomitant, competition for advertisements; the laws of libel; the Official Secrets Act; penalties for breach of Parliamentary privilege, for contempt of court, for invasion of privacy; the Obscenity laws; the demand for "workers' participation" in determining editorial policy; the anarchy that prevails in the industrial organisation of the newspaper industry; the folly, vanity, and incompetence of newspaper proprietors. Taken together, they might seem to form so impenetrable a thicket of inhibitions that one ought to be surprised if any journalist ever set an honest pen to paper; and indeed, if one were to accept all the criticisms directed at every item in the charge sheet, it would be a kind

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of miracle if the Press preserved any vestige of liberty at all.

Mr Wintour will have none of this. He goes on record as saying that he has never known the influence of advertisers affect editorial policy. I find this hard to believe, particularly in the case of local newspapers. He thinks that the exercise of shrewdness, instinct, taste will guard any good editor against the dangers inherent in the law of libel, which, in any case, he regards as an essential protection for the individual. He quite rightly, in my opinion, protests strongly against the House of Commons' absurdly inflated sense of what is required in order to defend "parliamentary privilege," and regards the threat of prosecution for contempt of court as perhaps the most effective legal restriction on the Press. But he believes that the dangers inherent in these legal processes have made themselves increasingly evident to the public and that with time they will assume a more rational and less arbitrary form. In fact he is convinced that legal threats to the freedom of the Press are at their worst only marginal, and that they leave any intelligent journalist with a sufficiently wide field of manoeuvre to exercise his craft effectively.

THE GREATEST DANGERS, indeed, seem to come from an entirely different direction; that is to say, not from outside the newspaper industry but from inside it. High on the list Mr Wintour places what he calls "managerial miscalculations", which is a polite expression for that extraordinary combination of frivolity and incompetence with which those who have until now effectively controlled the Press have conducted their own affairs. Even higher perhaps he places the threat to editorial freedom inherent in the increasing pressure of claims to "workers' control" in the industry. No doubt Mr Wintour is right in saying that such claims have a political content which is incompatible with freedom of editorial policy; but I do not think he sufficiently understands how far they are the inevitable result of the anarchy which has hitherto reigned in the industry. One effect of that anarchy has been to create a situation of financial instability such that, as a result of a series of mergers, the industry has increasingly fallen into the hands of men for whom, as for Lord Thomson of Fleet, newspapers are simply "a product", a commodity to be manufactured and sold just like any other, with the corollary that those which are financially least profitable must necessarily, by the laws of capitalist competition, go to the wall. As Mr Neal Ascherson, himself a leading exponent of workers' control, has said in the *New Statesman*, we all really know what the end of such a process must be. One day, not so far distant now, "one of the major Establishment papers will fold and then a major panic will break out." When that happens, the Press will be threatened with a degree of intervention such that the present threats to its liberty which Mr Wintour describes will appear merely minor; yet, as things are, such an event would appear to be inevitable.

It is only natural, contemplating such a process, that any conscientious journalist or printing operative, to whom the Press is not a "product" but their life's blood, should come to the conclusion that he could not possibly make a worse mess of things than those who have controlled the industry until now, and should adopt an attitude of *Italia fara da se*. Could the rule of Mr Briginshaw, of NATSOPA, possibly be worse, or have worse consequences for the Press, than that of Mr Cecil King or Lord Rothermere? Given the appalling ineptitude displayed by the directors of the *New Statesman* in their dismissal of Mr Richard Crossman, was it not natural and inevitable that its staff should conclude they could manage things rather better themselves (though it is by no means clear that they can)? When one can reasonably ask such questions, and when one knows that in the not very distant future they will have to be given a serious answer, and when one knows also that they arise out of the condition of the newspaper industry today, one has to conclude that there is a certain element of whistling in the dark in Mr Wintour's optimism, however restrained. This has not, however, prevented him from writing a very good book, which should be read by anyone who is interested in knowing how newspapers, and journalists, really work.

IN THE COURSE of his book, Mr Wintour tells many illuminating anecdotes about the vagaries of newspaper proprietors. Oddly enough, however (or perhaps it isn't), none of them relate to the Beaverbrook press, in which Mr Wintour has laboured so long and with such success. So perhaps I ought to add my own, hitherto unpublished anecdote about the late Lord Beaverbrook, as an illustration of what wild and foolish thoughts will sometimes fly into a Press Lord's head.

Some years ago, Lord Beaverbrook conceived the idea that it would be a very good thing for all concerned if I were to join his group of newspapers as a special writer. I do not know what put the idea into his Lordship's head, and when I was invited to see him in his penthouse at Arlington House, I accepted more out of curiosity than anything else, even though at the time I would have been glad of any kind of a job. I am afraid that I found Lord Beaverbrook totally without the charm so frequently ascribed to him, in particular because the interview consisted of an endless monologue by him, interrupted only

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by frequent dashes to the telephone to issue peremptory instructions to his staff, to Arthur Christiansen on the *Express*, to John Junor on the *Sunday Express*, perhaps to Charles Wintour himself. They were issued in such a manner as I would not have used to a criminal.

The theme of his monologue was the dazzling prospects of power and prosperity that a position in his group would open to me. He took me up, as it were, on a high mountain and showed me the kingdoms of this world as represented by the *Daily* and *Sunday Express*. I might even aspire, it appeared, to some such position as is now happily occupied by Mr A. J. P. Taylor, and, even better, might look forward to living in almost domestic intimacy with his Lordship. It was more like an offer of marriage than of a job.

His own eloquence persuaded Lord Beaverbrook, though not me, that such a proposal was irresistible, and after the monologue had continued for several hours, he took it for granted that everything had been satisfactorily arranged and all that remained was for me to proceed to Fleet Street and sign the contract which his executives had waiting for me. I, on the other hand, had begun to have feelings of panic and claustrophobia and longed only to escape from that Satanic presence, so I was glad when Lord Beaverbrook indicated that the monologue was at an end.

He accompanied me to the private lift of his flat, and as we waited for it to arrive he took me confidentially by the arm: "And don't forget," he said, "We're an anti-buggery paper."

It was the last I saw of Lord Beaverbrook. What can one say about such people?

★

BENJAMIN BRITTEN and Sir Duncan Wilson have recently appealed to us, in a letter to *The Times*, not to be misled by the activities of "certain Jewish organisations" who wish to prevent the holding of the projected Festival of Soviet Music in London. I think it is unfortunate that the authors of the letter should assume that it is only Jews who have objections to the Festival. I am no Jew, and I believe that any increase in cultural understanding between nations can only be for the good; and yet I cannot suppress feelings of uneasiness and discomfort at the idea of the Festival being held here.

I do not entirely understand these feelings myself, but they become a little clearer to me after reading *A Childhood in Prison* by Pyotr Yakir (Macmillan, £2.50). The author is one of the leaders of those dissident Soviet citizens who have repeatedly protested against the Soviet Government's shameful abuse of the human rights of the Soviet people and the flagrant illegality, under the Soviet Constitution, of the measures by which such abuses are perpetrated. But he is also the son of a famous father, Ion Yakir, commander of the Kiev Military District, who was executed in June 1937, at the height of the Stalinist terror, on charges which have never been revealed and were certainly false.

At that time his son, though only a baby, might well have been shot himself, as other children were, but in the event he was only sentenced as a "Socially Dangerous Element," that is, his only crime was that of being the son of his father.

Yakir's book is an account of his wanderings as a boy through the labyrinth of prisons and concentration camps which covers the vast spaces of the Soviet Union. It is a kind of *Huckleberry Finn* of the concentration camp system and gives an extraordinary fresh, vivid and moving picture of the Great Terror as seen through the innocent eyes of a boy.

The story, however, should, by Soviet standards, have a happy ending. By 1954 Yakir had emerged from the clutches of the KGB, his father was publicly rehabilitated as a result of Khrushchev's "thaw", and Yakir was able to take his rightful place as a member of Soviet society. But his childhood experiences had left him with the determination to expose what Pasternak called "the inhuman power of the lie" on which Soviet society is founded, and when, after Khrushchev's fall, a halt was called to the process of de-Stalinisation, and Stalin himself in part rehabilitated, Yakir conducted a series of public protests against the renewed campaign of persecution in which the Soviet authorities engaged. For these activities he has recently been re-arrested in Moscow.

Yakir, of course, is only one of the victims of this new form of modified terror, but his history makes him a particularly significant one. For the "inhuman power of the lie" still rules in the Soviet Union, and one can legitimately doubt whether any genuine cultural understanding can grow out of any contacts with the Soviet Union which have the blessing and approval of the Soviet authorities, who are the living representatives of that lie. It is for this reason, and this reason only, that others, in addition to "certain Jewish organisations", have doubts about the value of the Festival of Soviet Music.

In a message to the West published in *The Times*, 23 June 1972, Yakir concluded with the words: "Well, all you people in England, I greet you, however much you do or do not help us. . . ." One might well wonder how in fact one could help but I find it hard to believe that officially-sponsored festivals of music will do so.

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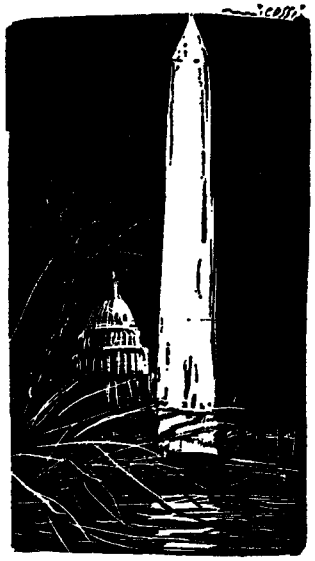
AMERICAN CHRONICLE

Loners in the World

By Luigi Barzini



IN THE EARLY 1950s, I had the opportunity of revisiting the United States after an absence of about thirteen years. Absence notoriously sharpens the eye, brings out the tiniest changes in dear and familiar faces, and often reveals taken-for-granted details as disturbingly significant.

The face of the United States was dear and familiar to me. Perhaps I know the country better than some Americans, too busy to pay attention to what is really going on about them, and than most foreigners, whose knowledge is usually based on hurried trips, American books, films, magazines, and newspapers. Foreigners seldom realise that most American sources are contaminated by an emotional urge to demonstrate one thing or another, to console or delude the author as well as the reader, to prove America still is, never was, surely will be soon, or will never be one thing or another. Bitterness or disappointment often makes Americans assert the opposite of what they wish to be true, in the hope of being convincingly confuted.

I liked to think I knew better than that. I had been a student in New York for five years in the 1920s; my first sweetheart had been American; some, perhaps most, of my old friends were American (Americans have a reckless capacity for friendship that cautious Europeans lack). I had crossed the continent a couple of times, in both directions, in broken-down old cars, then known as jalopies. I worked one summer as a cub reporter on the *New York World*; another year I got myself a job on the *Flushing* (Long Island) *Evening Journal*. Flushing was then still a little country town, at the edge of New York, with a monument to the Civil War soldier, a street dedicated to the Union, a court house with pillars, a red-brick armoury, an ancient Quaker meeting-house, and immense trees that bathed everything in trembling green shadow. It was on the side of a long creek which ended in vast, grey, stinking garbage dumps.

THE PUBLISHER WHO HIRED ME, Mr Clemens, was rumoured to be a relative of Mark Twain, possibly a nephew. He was an old, bald, pale-faced man with watery eyes who spoke with a Southern drawl. He wore a green eyeshade over his glasses, elastics on his shirt sleeves, a bow tie, and suspenders. His roll-top desk was out front, by the street entrance, behind the show windows (on which the Gothic letters of the masthead were written in gold), by the side of the low wooden swinging door, near Betty, the telephone girl, receptionist and secretary. His was a strategic position. He could watch the street, spy who came in and out and at what time, and, through the open door, what went on in the editorial room.

Mr Clemens looked me over (I was an eager nineteen-year-old boy) and described my duties. I was to be a police reporter at seven a.m.; a copy reader and headline writer later in the morning; an assistant makeup editor around noon; and a feature writer in the afternoon, to prepare copy for the next day's inside pages that would keep the linotype operators busy. "And, of course," he added, casually, "you'll pitch in when necessary and help the other men in their work." (This proved to be one of my most time-consuming tasks. The three other men often got drunk on bootleg booze and I, who did not drink, had not only to carry their burden but also sometimes carry them home.) For all this I was to get fifteen dollars a week. I was glad, of course, for the opportunity to make that much money but more for the chance to improve my English prose and enrich my professional experience in so many directions all at the same time.

Mr Clemens then looked closely at my name

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and address. His face showed astonishment:

"Luigi?" he asked. "Are you Italian?"

I admitted it. "And can you read and write?" he asked incredulously. I reassured him. I could read and write well enough for the *Flushing* (Long Island) *Evening Journal.*

I LEFT THE United States in 1930, after graduation. There was clearly no future for me in America at that time. As a matter of fact, there was no future for almost anybody. The Depression was on its way; the unemployed were already selling apples on the streets and lining up in front of soup kitchens. I returned to Italy, got a job on the *Corriere della Sera* in Milan, slowly worked my way up from local stories to international events of secondary interest, until, one day in 1933, I was dispatched to the United States for a *reportage* on the New Deal.

Three years later I was assigned to cover the 1936 election campaign (I got a splendid interview from Alf Landon in Kansas), and three years later still, in 1939, I was sent back to appraise the mood of the country "on the eve of the war." The temptation to stay behind was almost irresistible. However I felt it my duty to return to Italy, got back just before Hitler attacked Poland, was assigned to London that winter, eventually ended up in a Roman jail, in the spring, for political reasons, and a few weeks later was assigned to forced residence in the boondocks.

The war, the underground work, the immediate post-war turmoils, family problems, the uncertainties of the future, the difficult reconstruction of my life and the country's prevented my leaving. I worked hard, edited dailies and magazines, and ran for office. Finally, in 1952, I felt I could go without feeling I was deserting. Things had become relatively stable, as much as they could be in Italy anyway. I went back to the United States.

OF COURSE, many things had changed in America in the meantime. It would have been surprising and frightening if everything were as I had left it, as immutable as the *New York Times* typography or the smell of American french-fried potatoes. The most obvious novelties —those which my New York friends, old schoolmates, married girlfriends, and colleagues, were particularly proud of and never tired of pointing out—were more or less what I expected.

Glorious old landmarks had disappeared, of course; new buildings had been raised to unprecedented heights; more bold new bridges spanned rivers in all directions; new fashions, new tunes, new dances were the rage; new slang expressions were incomprehensible to me as the old familiar ones had become incomprehensible to the very young; young ladies used words young ladies had never used before, in public anyway.

All this—and the fact that many people I knew had died, vanished, without forwarding addresses, changed husband, wife, profession, political party, *Weltanschauung*, diet, name, home and, in a few cases, religion too—I considered drearily normal. More interesting and puzzling were less conspicuous changes which took me a few days to become aware of and longer still to define. They were undoubtedly the visible signs that a social revolution had taken place in the 1930s and the most expensive war in history had been fought and won a few years before.

To be sure, the social revolution had already been embalmed by specialists and could be studied in history books (in the United States history has always followed the newspapers by a short neck). It had left its unmistakable mark in laws, rhetoric, prejudices, editorials, school textbooks, the brooding silences of the lovers of *temporis acti,* the bold ideas of the intelligentsia, and everyday conversation. My feeling (possibly erroneous) was that the revolution had not been as deep as some believed or feared. It had not apparently disturbed the fundamental creeds and what Americans thought was their national character and the purpose of life.

I had to admit, however, that the very rich were not as fashionable as they had been in the past. They were no longer openly and innocently admired, envied, forgiven for their feats, marital adventures, sins, and extravagances. Their philanthropy had increased (or the publicity surrounding it; it was difficult for a foreigner to distinguish which), as if it now had become the principal justification for wealth. They were no longer the models for the humbler to imitate. Their mediaeval castles, *Petits Trianons,* Renaissance *palazzi,* stately English homes in the country or *hotels particuliers* in town, were often inhabited by decrepit survivors of another era, surrounded by decrepit retainers, or sold to nunneries, boarding schools, and commercial establishments.

An old friend of my father, a retired banker whom I visited in Long Island, no longer lived in his vast English manor, rich with armour, tapestries, and old masters, at the centre of an immense park. He had retired to a little flat in the neighbouring village and visited his princely home during the day. He told me he could find and pay enough servants and gardeners to keep it as a museum but not to live in it. Maybe also the moral burden of acting the role of a Medici and living far above the other people had become too uncomfortable.

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The American saga of the self-made man, who was born on a farm, delivered newspapers in his youth, became a honest labourer with calloused hands, went to night school, and turned into a benevolent plutocrat with white piping on his waistcoat, was no longer a regular feature of magazines and Sunday supplements. Great private balls were no longer respectfully described in the society pages, with all the details of the decorations (ballrooms transformed into Persian gardens, Versailles salons, or tropical gardens with flowers flown from the Caribees) and long lists of guests.

ALL THIS WAS PARTICULARLY DISTURBING to a European journalist. European correspondents had tirelessly described the life of the American rich, the "king" of this or that commodity, and of American outlaws (the Western and mobster varieties), for almost a century. It was what the editor, and presumably readers too, wanted. The gangsters were still there, but not the rich. What had become of the American dream? Immigrants had been lured to the United States not by a life of drudgery and exploitation in the slums, on the railroads, or in the mines, but by the hope of becoming (or seeing their sons become) millionaires, legally if possible.

The natives themselves often went through misery, years of dreary work, docile obedience, and hardships in heartless and efficient industrial organisations with the same wonderful hope in their hearts. "One day our ship will come in," said penniless husbands embracing bedraggled wives in the movies, and both their faces reflected the light of the radiant future. Natives, immigrants, as well as men who had not left their native countries, consoled themselves reading about millionaire heroes, the Great Gatsbys, just as the Greeks of old had listened to tales of prodigious mythological characters or mediaeval peasants, of knights, magic incantations, fairy godmothers and lower-class toads turned into upper-class princes.

THE QUESTIONS RAISED in my mind by all this were difficult to answer. Had America really been as obsessed with wealth in the past as foreign observers and the American popular press led us to believe? My private recollections were inconclusive. All my friends in the university had wanted to make money, lots of money, of course. So had I. But none of us wanted to sacrifice the pleasures and satisfactions of life to the boring, stupid, and dehumanising sport of amassing greenbacks. My friends and I, however, were probably not typical. Most of us were horrified by business careers and fascinated by books. We wanted to write.

One must remember that Americans, like the Chinese, when observed long enough separately at close quarters, no longer look alike. In fact they vary greatly, more than many other people, each one dissimilar from all his countrymen. When you get to know a few really well (which means when they stop talking to you as to a foreigner) most of them reveal themselves to be, more or less like all human beings, pathetic and brave, baffled, to be sure, by their own unique and terrifying contemporary problems, but tortured also by the eternal problems.

And yet, dissimilar as they all are, Blacks, Whites, Jews, Gentiles, Mediterraneans, Northerners, or Asiatics, there is something elusive which makes them all unmistakably American and makes it easy always to spot them in a foreign crowd. This is not only clothes, voices and accents, because a trained eye distinguishes them even when silent, in disguise, in bathing suits, and sometimes naked. It must be (this is only an hypothesis) the outward reflection on their faces and bodies of their American ideas. The fact that Americans are not as uniform as the superficial observer thinks makes it almost impossible, for anybody who knows them at all well, to generalise convincingly and to write plausibly about them.

Was, for example, this shift away from wealth which I noticed after the War a local phenomenon due to the American social revolution of the 1930s, or was it also a sign of the times, common to most of the Western world? Everywhere or almost everywhere the élite had tried to shed the visible trappings of privilege, royal princes rode bicycles and sometimes married stenographers, millionaires dressed and behaved like working men, famous personages tried to disappear in the crowd, wore sun-glasses, and lived in the shadows.

Had society really changed as much as people thought, and could it really change in a country where the majority had always belonged (or believed they belonged) to the middle class anyway? The revolution had undoubtedly been a middle-class revolution, had consolidated middle-class ways, ideals, advantages, privileges; it was only natural that everybody, as it happens after all revolutions, outwardly adopted the style of the winner, the new ruling class. But had not many of the American rich always been uncomfortable in their princely role, had they not always been ready to play poker in their shirt sleeves in some back room and to exchange jokes with old friends?

THERE WERE OTHER, more subtle changes, which I found difficult at first to define and explain. The typical American seemed to me to have grown stouter, flabbier, and curiously facetious. The tweedy, lean, pipe-smoking characters I had

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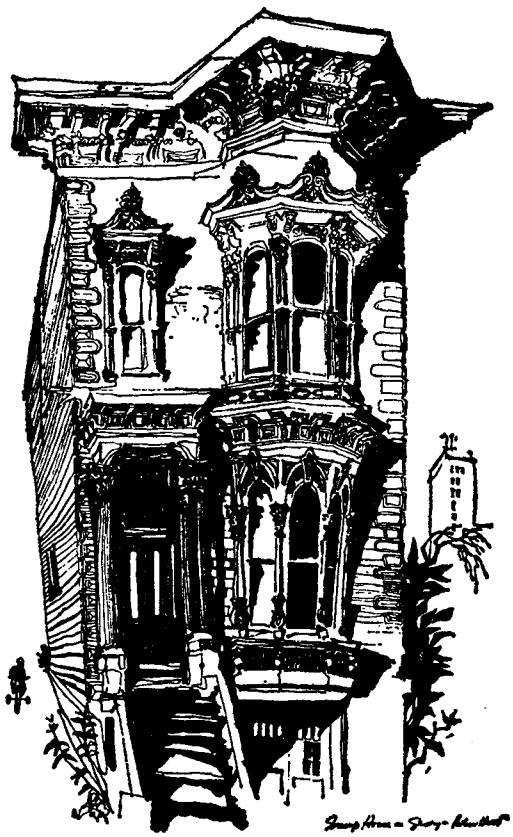
considered common—maybe I had noticed them more because they flattered a preconceived idea of mine, maybe they had really been common in college lecture rooms or newspapers' editorial offices—seemed to have become scarce. Their habitual pose had been a kind of jovial grumpiness, their humour pointedly disagreeable. Perhaps they were afraid to be taken for servile toadies, as they had always been afraid to seem unmanly. Men never carried a cane, seldom wore spats, and never a monocle, sure signs of un-American effeminacy. They said gruffly: "You look like a decaying corpse this morning," "You won't last long," "I hope you choke," "Drop dead," "Get lost," "I hope you get run over by a streetcar," and "What's your poison?".



Now (in the early 1950s) the prevalent pose was one of forced cordiality, as if they wanted everybody to think they were *simpatico* and to love them. The idea that Americans wanted to be loved at all costs at this point in their history was puzzling and distressing. Why? They made flattering remarks. They told me I was a remarkable man, I amazingly spoke English with no foreign accent (which is not true), reassured me that I looked young for my age and in the very best of health. This friendliness seemed at times slightly more than strictly necessary, including that of New York doormen and shop clerks, who, as a rule, had always been proudly rude and contemptuous in the past.

People I had just met now called me by my first name, and not only fatherly gentlemen like Mr Clemens who, years before, sometimes did so with a protective air, but also men younger than I; and all insisted I call them Tom, Dick, or Harry in return. "Why does Luigi always call me *Maestro* or Mr Rogers?" complained Richard R. Rogers to a common friend. "Doesn't he like me?" I liked him, of course, but had not known him long and felt I had to show respect for his fame and age. I would have been mad to call Stravinsky "Igor" or "Igor Fedorovich." Had I ever called Arturo Toscanini, a friend of the family, anything but *Maestro*? (Even his wife Carla called him Toscanini, or "Tosca" for short.)

Moreover, my dark Italian appearance and accent no longer provoked the disdainful responses (or the pointed courtesies) of old. Could Americans have changed so much that they no longer considered a Mediterranean origin an unpardonable aberration, but a vaguely amusing and perhaps even a charming and enviable advantage? Was all this in some way also connected with the bitterness of increased competition among them, which deprived them of the old-fashioned pleasure of making unnecessary enemies? Was it somehow related to the fact that they were not as lean as I remembered them? Did they no longer despise good food as something to be enjoyed occasionally, but fundamentally heathen, good only for the Chinese, the French, the Jews, the Armenians, and the Italians?

Did they no longer go in as assiduously for Spartan sports? Had their blissful certainties been weakened by the Depression? Could the Depression and the War have taught many of them understanding, tolerance, and respect, if not appreciation, for foreign ways? Could it be that the people who had defeated the greatest economic slump and won the greatest military conflict in history had acquired doubts about their superiority in the very moment of their triumph when they had emerged as the *Numero Uno* of all Empires and the richest in history?

GRADUALLY I BEGAN TO SUSPECT that Americans, at least some of them, were no longer as greedy for hard work nor as keen on efficiency as they had appeared to be. Work had not been for them (I was thinking of Mr Clemens) Adam's curse but life's fulfilment and a real pleasure. When I dropped into friends' offices, during my first trip after the war, I saw them beam with delight not

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only at my visit but at the interruption. They no longer expressed polite regrets (between telephone calls) not to be able to chat with me as much as they would have liked; they no longer asked briskly, "What can I do for you?" They now said: "Good to see you, have a drink, do you smoke cigars, what's new?", put their feet on the desk, told their secretaries not to put through any calls, and seemed relieved at the chance to stop working. Some went out for lunch for an hour or two, like Romans or Parisians. More and more of them were not in the office on Friday.

All this troubled me. I had always envied the Americans' capacity to sit whole days at their desks without so much as lifting their heads to look out of the window. Was this a significant change? How significant and how much of a change? Had, to begin with, Americans (I mean the single human Americans I knew and not Americans unconsciously impersonating Americans in front of a foreigner) been really as greedy for hard work, discipline, and efficiency as they had appeared to be? Had the high income tax, as I had been told, robbed them of the pleasure of making money? Were they secretly rebelling against their iron fate?

Was the Calvinist ethic weakening? One could not tell from figures: the GNP was rising all the time. Perhaps they had discovered that hard work was not always the best way to increase production and to make money, let alone solve difficult problems. Did the phenomenon appear more significant because of my age and my friends'? It was only natural that young men in their twenties pedalled harder to get to the top of the rise and mature men in their forties allowed themselves to coast downhill when possible. Older men, like older sportsmen, learn to avoid unnecessary efforts. I could not reach a convincing conclusion.

WHAT INTERESTED ME perhaps more than anything else were the few things which, in a society dedicated to perennial change, in which change was life and immobility was death, remained imperturbably identical, as the isolated rocks overrun by breakers reappear from the swirling foams glistening and streaming with water, but intact and at the same place. Obviously, I concluded, the first few days after my first arrival in the early 1950s, as I walked about, overheard people's talk, looked at the immutable water tanks on the buildings' roofs, at shop windows and people's faces, sniffed the smells and listened to the noises, rode subway cars, New York was unmistakably still New York. To be sure, the subway cars were dirtier than I remembered them (the whole city was dirtier as well) and gone was the handsome gold-lettered warning that a *500-Dollar Fine* awaited anybody who spat on the floor (maybe the warning had become ineffective because nobody spat or because nobody was any longer intimidated by mere typography). Still they were substantially the subway cars of my youth. They smelled the same and made the same noises.

This sensation that not everything had changed comforted and reassured me on my very first morning. Like all air travellers from Europe, I woke up at dawn, long before room service could supply me with a cup of coffee. I dressed and walked a few blocks to an all-night luncheonette, where I sat with unshaved and sleepy taxi drivers, truck drivers, a crummy old woman, a drunk, some clean-looking boys and girls who had had a good night's sleep and a good wash, and a policeman. Some of the customers were holding the *Daily News* in front of their faces. The huge cryptic front-page monosyllabic headline screamed something about an arrested murderer, *"COPS NAB BOB."*

The smells were familiar and unmistakable: American coffee, bacon, french fries, scalded grease on the hot plate, eggs. As always the waiter kept on drawing coffee from the spigot and pouring it back into the top of the glistening machine. (Only Americans do that. Other peoples have discovered that keeping coffee hot by boiling it over again gives it a dark colour but also an acid and metallic taste.) The signs on the mirror behind his back, advertising the day's specials; the customers' voices, their honest New York accent, the weak and worn-out wisecracks repeated without a smile, out of one corner of the mouth; the waiter's orders shouted to the cook, his reassuring answers to customers ("scrambled eggs coming up"), his conjurer's gestures, the hiss of the machines; and then the taste of the hot watery coffee, of the salted butter on the toasted insipid bread . . . I felt as if I had never been away, was twenty-five years younger with a pink police-card under the ribbon of my fedora.

I discovered later, during that first visit (and later again, when, for one reason or another, I had to return more and more often, until I found myself somewhere in the United States almost once a year), that many more things had never changed—and probably would not change in the future, or change only on the surface—than *News* headlines, beaneries' food, and their customers' looks and manners. (Even in this field, to be absolutely honest, a few things were different. Almost gone were the old wagons on the vacant lots, the honest sign *EATS*, and some of the roughest proletarian "specials".)

AS THE YEARS WENT BY, I unwillingly seemed to be gathering a mental collection of some of these

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perennial qualities of American life, but could talk about them with only a few American friends. (Most of the others were politely shocked at my insistence that a few things that mattered went on almost unaltered from one generation to another, and thought me a foreign screwball with a European *idée fixe*.) These random observations irritated me too. I relegated them to the attic of my mind as unusable, while I went about my real business, which was meeting important people, reading fresh documents, reports, speeches, newspapers, books, attending press conferences, and picking the brains of other journalists, in order to gather material for my articles. Articles are supposed to be as brilliant and short-lived as fireworks. Like them, they must illuminate the contemporary scene for a fleeting moment. Journalism, I had been taught at Columbia, is the recording of the new, the bizarre, the timely, the different; it must avoid the immutable, permanent, longer lasting than bronze. These constant traits in American life were obviously unusable; some were uninteresting and insignificant, anyway, but a few were possibly revealing clues.

ONE OF THESE was practically unchanged since my college days (and surely for more than a century-and-a-half before). It was the firm and enviable belief, shared apparently by most Americans, the simple, the sophisticated, and the anti-conformists too, that all life's riddles had answers at the end of the book, as they can be found in honest textbooks of mathematics and in well-constructed detective stories. This was and remains a most reassuring belief. Time, Americans thought (and many of them probably still think), was a gentleman, did not cheat, and would eventually take care of everything; somewhere surely there always is a still unknown young man (or a team of them) making revolutionary inventions, discovering new miracle drugs, formulating a new scientific law, devising a machine, working out the answers. He did not always have to be a genius, like Leonardo da Vinci. More often he was just "one of us."

Incidentally, this seems to be another constant trait. For some reason, Americans like to think that Great Men are like everybody else and prove it by saying that "they put their pants on one leg at a time." This necessity to appear to be "one of us" at all costs makes astronauts talk like schoolchildren on a picnic, prevents eminent scientists, scholars, thinkers, heroes, or statesmen of today (not of the past) from delivering immortal lines. Deep emotions or high thoughts often are expressed in the form of weak jokes. The press always reports these quotations eagerly, to confirm the myth that "all men are more or less the same" and that practically anybody could write the Faulkner opus, discover the structure of DNA, or write a great symphony, if only he had the proper equipment and took the time.

Any "one of us" knows what one has to do when facing a problem, any problem, a personal affair, a family difficulty, a financial decision, a scientific enigma, but more particularly the Big Problems which Great Experts or the President's staff have to work out. One must not lose one's head. One indiscriminately gathers all the data, mountains of data, the more the better; gets the best minds together; collects money, the more money the better; chooses the best leader; works out a new formula, a novel approach, and, almost inevitably, invents new ingenious contraptions; finally sets up a suitable organisation. Then one waits, like the gardener who has properly prepared the soil and placed the right seed in it, for something to sprout. This is how the Panama Canal was dug, yellow fever defeated, and the atomic bomb built. Significantly enough, among these guiding rules one was usually missing or given little weight—the study of precedents, the lessons of history, possibly because the past was believed to be generally misleading and hope was only in the future anyway. ("If only President Johnson had read *De Bello Gallico* he would have avoided many mistakes . . ." an old European observer of American life complained to me many years later.)

If results are slow to appear, all one had to do was double the ante, increase the efforts, the work, the funds available, the number and expertise of experts, the length of conferences, the size and complexity of the organisation, the amount and thickness of reports, and, if necessary, perfect the machine or machines invented for the purpose or devise new ones. Naturally, Americans are at times uproariously wrong. Not all difficulties can be exorcised that way. At times the machinery becomes so cumbersome and labyrinthine that it stops working altogether, making complicated problems completely insoluble. But the irritating thing is that Americans obtain results often enough to be confirmed in their unshakeable faith, and to make fools of the wise, sceptical, doubting, cautious, ancient Europeans. Americans are able to untangle tricky knots, with brilliant new approaches, often enough to dazzle foreigners and to show the way to the rest of the world. It may even be, sometimes, the wrong way.

THIS BELIEF MADE Americans immensely strong; nothing on earth and beyond seemed to be impossible to them; they appeared to dispose of

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most barriers. But, at the same time, it made them morally more pathetically vulnerable, thin-skinned, embittered, and defenceless than other people. It is at the origin of their perpetual discontent, their restlessness, the *angst* which tortures them, their secret lives of quiet desperation. They are perpetually resentful and impatient. Why, they seem to ask, when a solution surely exists and can be found, do we put up with such discomforts, injustices, and ills? Why has it not yet been found?

The fact is they cannot easily endure failure or defeat. Europeans and others are often grateful that some nostrum of sorts has assuaged some of their ancient ills, that things are not as bad as they could be, and they look no further. Americans are forever disappointed that the definitive answer has not yet been discovered (they refuse to believe that sometimes there is no definitive answer, or there could be many competing unsatisfactory ones), that things are not as good as they could be, and that some of the successful remedies sometimes provoke worse miseries than those they cure. What many Americans find particularly incomprehensible is that while the method usually (but not always) works wonders in scientific research and the application of technological knowledge to practical ends, it does not seem to be thaumaturgic in other fields.

People asked (and still ask) you, at dinner, on television, or in the more thoughtful magazines, the same question: Why don't we spend as much to solve problem *A* (a cure for cancer, the integration of the blacks, world peace, the decay of cities, the corruption of social life, *la condition humaine*, or the revival of vanishing moral values) as we do in sending men and gadgets into space? The answer, of course, is that Americans have been conditioned by their past to do things in a tidy manner, according to the book, *a regola d'arte*, to face with greater ease problems for which the answers are measurable, calculable, verifiable, certain. They are so comfortable with this way of disposing of difficulties that they try to stretch all problems (even those which tortured ancient Greek philosophers or mediaeval theologians) on the Procrustes' bed of mathematics.

THIS TENDENCY MAY BE characteristic of the middle class all over the world, or it may be due to a native repugnance for abstract thinking. The Americans' preference for pragmatism, science, and numbers may make them wary of the lure of abstract thinking, which gives one the illusory feeling of having coped with the matter, and of all theorising which cannot be confirmed by means of experiment. This may also be one of the visible signs of their compulsive urge (possibly a national trait) to control hazards, defeat blind chance, forestall the mysterious workings of Fate, guide Divine Providence, abhor exceptions and irregularities, dominate the stormy and contradictory confusion of life and nature. This is curious to observe in a people who believe they had crossed the ocean and filled a continent in the pursuit of risk and adventures, as well as for the fearless love of the very hazards they work so hard to abolish.

This contradiction, of course, may not be uniquely American but part of the essential nature of all men, who often try to destroy the very things they most desire. Lawless Italians are among the keenest scholars of jurisprudence, and boast of being the inventors and teachers of Law to the world; great gamblers search in vain for a system to break the bank at Monte Carlo and to abolish that very delicious uncertainty which keeps them at the green tables day and night and fills their empty lives. Who else would have dedicated so much energy, crusading enthusiasm, money, political sagacity, and legislative ingenuity to the abolition of alcoholic beverages as Americans, who drink and possibly need the consolations of hard liquor more than any other people (with the possible exception of the Russians)?

ON MY RETURN VISIT in the early 1950s, the United States was hesitatingly but proudly trying out its role as the World's Greatest Imperial Power of All Times. The role was undoubtedly new, but, like other American novelties, not as new as many were inclined to believe, nor was it really as unwanted and unexpected. It is true, of course, that Americans had always been tempted to ignore other people's squabbles, isolate themselves, cultivate their own fertile garden, and mind their own business, which, as Calvin Coolidge authoritatively pointed out, was business.

It is also true that (as Lord Bryce explained long before the Spanish-American War and the liberation of the Philippine Islands) "they have a well-grounded aversion to the incorporation or control of any community not anxious to be one with them," perhaps because "their administrative posts set up in a dependent country would certainly be jobbed, and the dependent country itself probably maladministered," as a result of which "all such work (in the past) has been badly done and has given rise to scandals."

On the other hand, it is well known that some kind of irresistible imperial streak had been evident from the beginning, a philanthropic urge to spread the blessings of American ways, which include good sanitation, the rule of law, commerce, parsimony, and technology as the mother

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of affluence; to feel responsible for the welfare and happiness of different, heathen, and distant people; to defend them from the greed of Europeans or their own lack of foresight and prudence; to help them to become what Americans believe to be every man's desire, a tolerable imitation of the American model; and to exercise a jealous and very emotional defence of American interests, anywhere in the world.

THESE TWO TENDENCIES have not proved to be as contradictory as they might seem. At no time have Americans tolerated foreign interference in their own country and continent (they made this perfectly clear in a number of circumstances and in several fundamental documents) but, at the same time, always felt incapable of standing by and letting what they considered distressing developments occur almost anywhere, to the south or across the two oceans. The list of their military expeditions abroad is a long and familiar one. They intervened decisively in Mexico, China, the Philippines, Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, and elsewhere. They waged two World Wars in faraway places.

To be sure, the Korean conflict (which was being fought when I returned to New York) had not been secretly plotted in Washington by greedy imperialists, or enthusiastic do-gooders. It had been crudely forced on a pacific United States by ill-informed and naïve, if exceedingly well-armed, aggressors. It, too, had inevitably awakened the old American proud certainty that no enemy (least of all a poor, underdeveloped, illiterate and enslaved enemy) could stand up for long against the impact of the American native virtues, the real source of American power.

These enviable virtues are the wartime version of peacetime virtues. They include the capacity to work together in immense numbers towards one clear goal; to share the same simple, fundamental ideas; to fight bravely and to die for them; nimbly to create organisations *ad hoc* as unexpected needs arise; to disband them when no longer useful; to let mistakes and defeats suggest improvements and corrections; to design all the necessary new gear, vehicles, planes, and diabolical weapons; to mobilise immense material and technological resources in order to produce and transport hardware and supplies quickly and in great quantities.

The war once again also brought out that great American military traditional knack, irritating to all European strategic experts, including Karl Marx, of preferring dreary massive logistics to brilliant Napoleonic manoeuvres, and, in the end, preferring the dull but thorough general, George Brinton McClellan rather than dashing Philip Sheridan, Dwight Eisenhower rather than George Patton. Among the American wartime assets is also the honest repulsion from "the incorporation or control" of conquered lands, which reassures allies, enemies, and the Americans themselves; as well as the compulsion to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, cure the sick, among the conquered people as well as their own. It all makes defeat by Americans tolerable and sometimes even desirable.

THINGS, NOTORIOUSLY, DID NOT entirely turn out in Korea—and later in Viet Nam—according to the prescribed pattern. For the first time in history, the American virtues proved themselves inadequate. The primitive enemy was not as impressed as he should have been by the display of terrifying science-fiction machines and techniques. In fact, the very presence on the battlefield of such expensive and contrived weapons and vehicles tended at times to weaken the American soldier's will to fight. Had he not been taught since childhood that the machines would always do the trick and were irresistible in war as they had become indispensable in peace? Not only were the primitive enemies not frightened but they also fought on valiantly with whatever cheap and old-fashioned and homemade arms they possessed. They occasionally won victories and managed to neutralise the splendid and expensive effort of the Americans, simply because their men did not mind dying in droves. in the obsolete way of the Spartans at Thermopylae.

All this, at the time of the Korean War, was new and disturbing, particularly because the situation, as friends saw it and explained it to me, looked unmistakably simple, as simple as similar situations had seemed in the past. The Good Guys were, as always, on one side ("our" side), and the Bad Guys on the other; the Good Guys were defending justice and fighting for liberty and progress; the Bad Guys were the aggressors (nobody could deny it), ill-fed, ill-housed and regimented slaves resigned to their own servile condition and conscripted to make all men slaves. Why should there have been any doubts about

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the outcome? Didn't the Good always win? Furthermore, wasn't God (or History) on the side of the big reinforced battalions, especially if they were also well fed and well armed, and backed by a disciplined, moral, intelligent, industrious, highly organised, technically efficient people, enlightened by science, animated by lofty ideals, and strengthened by the most nearly perfect political institutions ever devised by man? Had the United States ever lost a war?

The fact that the armies in Korea suffered at times costly reverses, embarassingly often in front of television cameras, and had to fall back in disorder to what the military euphemistically call prearranged defensive lines was considered at the time grievously unfortunate but normal. Such things had always happened to victorious armies. Americans had known bloody but temporary defeats in their most fortunate campaigns. The setbacks in Korea were usually compensated, anyway, by subsequent victories and the occupation of vast expanses of territory.

What really began to worry and bother some Americans in those years was the fact that, for the first time, there seemed to be no way to convince the enemy once and for all they had been beaten and had no choice but to sue for peace. That the Americans would not lose in the end was taken for granted, but nobody seemed to know how they could win. *This* sort of thing had never quite happened before. Defeated enemies must always recognise their defeat. Not these. More and more Chinese and North Koreans came in waves to be slaughtered, as if their reserves were inexhaustible, and their lives meaningless. Nothing seemed to slow down or stop the flow.

Many explanations were offered, that life counted for nothing to people enslaved by a totalitarian tyranny; the Good Guys always won but nobody could tell how long it might take; the enemy leaders were too ignorant and fanatical to know they had no chance; the Soviet Union found it convenient to keep the war going, weakening China and the United States; some American commanders had, unfortunately, made a number of grievous mistakes; timid politicians in Washington were thwarting the brilliant conceptions of the generals which would have ended the war in a matter of weeks or months.

Only a few began to suspect that the system which had produced wonders in the past, both at home and abroad, in peace and war, no longer worked automatically in the contemporary world under all conditions. What had gone wrong, the system or the world?

I WENT TO SEE GEORGE who had come back from Korea a few weeks before. He had been at Columbia University with me. Born in Oregon from a New England family, he was blond, blue-eyed, tall, muscular, vigorous, optimistic. In the old days he had loved racing cars and girls. Once in a while he disappeared for days to go on what was called "a binge." This was to me an esoteric American ritual of sorts, a kind of self-punishment, a period of exile from reality comparable to Eleusinian mysteries or the retreat good Catholics go into when in the spiritual dumps.

When he reappeared he looked dishevelled, incredibly dirty, with bloodshot eyes, black-lined finger nails, a few days' growth of golden stubble, dirt-filled wrinkles, and little crusts on his face. He then went to the local gym and worked hard for a few hours, emerging in the end wonderfully healthy, clean, and in excellent humour. How he (and many others like him) did it, I do not pretend to know. It was a miraculous American gift. A "binge" would have destroyed me for weeks.

George had been a test pilot for experimental planes in the early '30s, joined the Marine Corps air force, rose in rank, married a petite blonde wife, Amy. Then he left the service, entered a Wall Street firm of sorts, bought a house in Connecticut at the edge of a wild wood, and raised hemp-blond children. He had fought the Japanese in the Pacific and, when the Korean War broke out, had been recalled to the service.

George and I had absolutely nothing in common. When sitting on speakeasy bar-stools, in the old days, one next to the other, I sometimes looked in the fly-specked mirror behind the bartender at the two twenty-year-old boys, and wondered what made us such good friends (we still are), one relatively small, black-haired, black-eyed, with a shrewd and cautious old man's expression on his pale face, and the pink and happy giant exuding sanguine certainties.

Perhaps each of us was seeking solace from his own hereditary virtues. I thought George was the United States, the reckless and irreverent new wisdom of the Republic, the magic know-how, the indestructible health, the vigorous and fearless life. I vaguely imagined that, somehow, once I had comprehended George, America could have no secrets for me. What he saw in me I can only guess. He was possibly mystified and fascinated by my addiction to books, the odd bits of useless information that issued from me unexpectedly, the foreignness, the ancient Mediterranean world (upon which his teachers had for some pedantic reason taught him to look with awe). Who knows?

Amy was preparing dinner for us while we had drinks. She was tireless and cheerful. She had a very full day: breakfast for everybody, work in the garden and in the house (which had included, that day, the painting of six doors), supper for the children, dinner for us. Once again I had to

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take notice of one of the subtle differences between the American Empire and all those which had preceded it, possibly a precious clue of sorts, which, if properly interpreted, could possibly lead to some significant conclusion.

THE MORE THE NATIONAL POWER, wealth, prestige, and responsibilities increased, the more American women of all classes (even many who could afford not to) went back to the backbreaking work of their great-grandmothers, the early settlers, the pioneers. Amy, in another age and another Empire, would have lived in a sumptuous marble mansion, not in a tiny imitation colonial wooden house; and, reclining languidly in expensive clothes, she would have directed an army of slaves or servants to do all the jobs she was gaily doing herself.

George, of course, was enthusiastic about his Korean experience. He had seen the war from behind desks or from the air, and this had saved him from some of the more gruesome daily experiences of infantrymen. He told funny and pathetic anecdotes, described the stunning new planes, the gadgetry devised since the previous war, the technical advances in all fields, and the stupendous machines that were still in the experimental stage. He called the North Koreans "gooks" without venom, as if that was one of their proper names. He had no doubts that Providence had been generous to the American people, giving them a man like General Douglas MacArthur at the time of need.

"Mac," he said, "is the best man for the job since Caesar. He's a great statesman, a great leader of men, a great strategist, as well as a great fighter in action." But the politicians in Washington had him hamstrung. He wanted to end the war, *i.e.* to do the things that would win it, invade Manchuria, blockade the China coast, unleash Chiang Kai-shek. Each of these moves, to be sure, was risky and could have provoked unforeseen reactions.

"But," George said, "when decisions are taken boldly and fearlessly, the execution is quick and resolute—you have superiority in the air and at sea—you choose the spot and the time to strike—the enemy is always taken by surprise, dominated psychologically, forced to surrender. . . . This is the way we have always done it."

After dinner, George sadly admitted that perhaps MacArthur with all his gifts had been born at the wrong time in history. Maybe the politicians had something. There was a real danger that the Soviet Union, which could not afford to see China humiliated, would start an atomic war, "WW III"; or that the United States would get itself bogged down in an infantry war in China, a nightmare. How many millions of men and how many billions of dollars would it swallow, decade after decade, without hope? And would the Americans stand for being bled white of all their wealth and their best youth? He also admitted that the NATO allies had some reason to be worried.

"Wars," George said, looking intently at the ashes of his cigar, "used to be simple. You fought as best you could and you won. It was always the other guy who lost. Some guy died, some guy came back alive, and you forgot the whole thing. But why should war still be simple when life itself is getting more damned complicated every day? I'm not the type who looks for traitors in Washington. There may be some, of course. There have always been in all our wars. But they never really decide the outcome. There are other reasons for our failure.

"The problem," he went on, as if talking to himself, "is that in the world of today an honest, old-fashioned man is hobbled—an honest country is not free any more to do whatever is necessary to bring a war to an end, a war it never wanted anyway. Nobody understands us and what makes us move any more. Why do even our friends accuse us of ulterior motives, diabolical schemes, imperialistic aims, aggression, when all we ask is to help others and come home and get on with other jobs? You know us, Luigi. You know how simple we are, how honourable our intentions, how disinterested, and how incapable of intrigues, deceit, skulduggery. . . ."

LATER, AS I CAME AND WENT, as the defence of the United States world-wide involvements and responsibilities, as well as the preservation of its power and influence, became more and more complex and irksome and the cost practically unendurable, the imperial role began to pall on many Americans. They discovered with aggrieved surprise that not everybody was ready to accept the authority of the policeman pounding his beat, not everybody took for granted his right, capacity, and will to inflict punishments on all transgressors. There was a real danger that the United States would eventually end up like the cop played by Charlie Chaplin in *Easy Street*, on whom kitchen stoves and garbage rained from first-floor windows.

In other words, not every inhabitant of the rest of the world (as well as some Americans) completely and wholeheartedly shared the Americans' officially proclaimed conceptions, trusted their motivations, and entertained all of their traditional hopes. Even such ideals as economic development or peace, which any sane man would be tempted to consider universal, *i.e.* shared by all men in all stages of sociological development in all parts of the terraqueous globe, turned out not to be quite everybody's dream.

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There actually seemed to be people on earth who preferred the joys of slaughtering their enemies (and accepted a life of unendurable sacrifices to do it) to the tranquil pursuits of industry, agriculture and commerce, people to whom war, hunger, and death seemed more desirable than the life they led. All this, of course, should not have come as a surprise. A careful reading of American history would have shown that many Americans, including Southerners and the aborigines, at one time or another, had preferred war and death to making the economy blossom.

To be sure, by the early 1950s, many American leaders had learned that not every man, European, East Indian, Chinese, Korean, as well as American Indian or Negro descendent of Southern slaves, wanted to transform himself into the American model. (Only a few years before, Roosevelt still believed this or pretended to believe it. He used to say that all that was necessary to destroy Communism in the Soviet Union was for the United States Air Force to air-drop enough Russian translations of the Sears Roebuck catalogue. . . .)

Yet the majority of leaders (perhaps all of them) could not openly and officially abandon the belief that, in some way, all human beings—and not only the West and East Europeans, but also nomadic Bedouins, Kalmuks, naked inhabitants of tropical jungles or fur-clad Eskimos —who, for reasons of their own, might not want to become imitation Americans, were, nevertheless, *au fond,* fundamentally, *mutatis mutandis,* more or less as the Americans imagine themselves to be, and that they would react as Americans are supposed to in front of any given situation, for they were people who could be reasoned with, who could be persuaded, who were amenable to the dictates of "common sense," and left to themselves, they would ultimately choose the right road.

HERE, OF COURSE, I SHOULD interrupt this memoir with a few remarks with which to try to define what Americans mean when they say "American" or "typical American." While the word is often applied to all the inhabitants of the United States indiscriminately, it has numerous other overlapping connotations. It somehow now stands for "the kind of person produced by an advanced industrial civilisation, a man mainly conditioned by the rules necessary for orderly mass production and consumption" (as in: "The Japanese are becoming more and more like Americans").

At other times, the term seems instead to describe a particular specimen, a middle-class, patriotic, hard-working man, living predominantly in the tidy suburbs of the Northeastern states and the Middle West (more rarely also in other parts of the country), a man still shaped (positively or negatively) by the Puritan inheritance, inspired by noble Eighteenth-Century ideas, who firmly believes, among other things, in a better future. More rarely, but significantly, the word is loosely employed as the good contrary of the bad "un-American." In this case, one should define "un-American" first, to know what "American" means, an almost impossible job.

Americans cannot easily abandon their deeply rooted conviction that every human being on earth is fundamentally like what they conceive or hope themselves to be because, to be sure, it has some foundations in reality, but also because it is not an ordinary presumption but an article of faith, in fact, the very foundation of the Republic. The Republic rests notoriously on the certainty that not only the Americans, but every man, everywhere on the planet, today as in the remote past and the future, is endowed with common human qualities, among which is innate and natural goodness; that he knows how to distinguish good from evil and would avoid evil; and that there is no limit to his perfectibility.

There are, of course, as there have always been, as many exceptions (some of them monstrous) as confirmations to this imaginary law of Nature, exceptions of which Americans have always been well aware. Being pragmatic and respectful of the facts of life, they have successfully coped with them for centuries, within their own continental frontiers and in their foreign relations. This is the reason they passed immigration laws, built jails, and put policemen and soldiers on the payroll. But they always managed, one way or another, to explain away all deviations from the ideal norm. They cannot do otherwise. They cannot officially and publicly give up this article of faith because, if they did, they would no longer be American. They would lose their *raison d'être* and their moral strength; they would become as weak as Antaeus when no longer in contact with Mother Earth.

Let the reader not be mistaken. I, too, think that it would be wondrous if all men were good and, in moments of intellectual weakness, I even manage to believe it: if everybody behaved decently, problems would be simple and life more acceptable. I, too, tend to be persuaded that the American ideals represent the most advanced point reached by Western man in political thinking. Having lived under one totalitarian dictatorship and visited several more modern models, I also believe that the American experiment (or some of its imitations) with all its bugs, corruptions and ineptitudes, its senatorial rhetoric and back-alley violence, is the only workable form of government not only for men who want to be free

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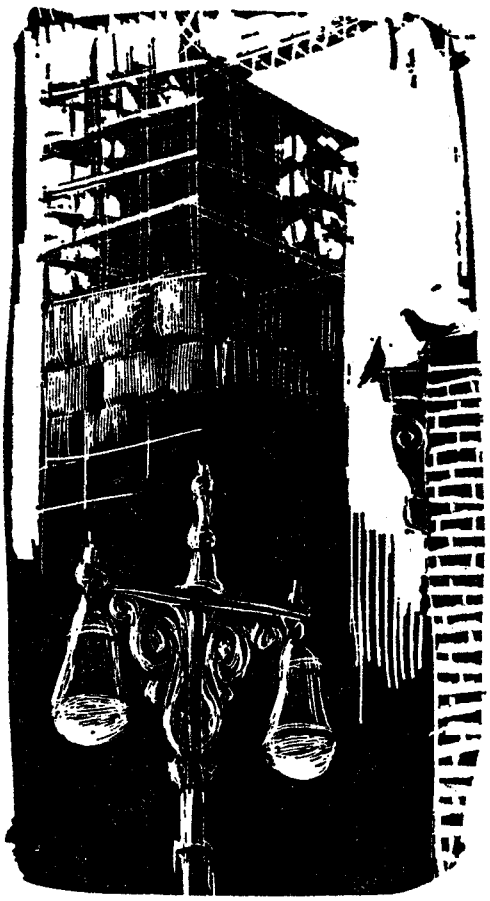
but for all men because it is endowed with self-adjusting mechanisms which rigid régimes lack; that most of what appear to be grave contradictions on the American scene often are, in reality, but the struggle of bodies and antibodies in a healthy and developing organism.

Nevertheless, I also regretfully have to admit that the generous application to the world of American rules of conduct and beliefs did not solve all problems. Sometimes it even made them more complicated. As could already be seen in the 1950s, the Americans, deluded by their abstract conception of the nature of man and by their staunch optimism (which can often be a subterfuge of the timid to avoid disagreeable decisions), stumbled open-eyed into visible traps.



IT HAS ALWAYS been known (and American leaders sadly admit it behind closed doors, and off the record) that it is almost impossible to gain political ends without a little unpleasantness. Politics, especially international power-politics, is not a bowl of cherries. It has been known for centuries that, in order to enforce peace or to make war, one must prudently start from a pessimistic conception of the nature of man, singly and in the mass, and presume he can be manoeuvred when necessary by guile and force, toward what the leaders hold to be his own good. Man, of course, singly or in the mass, is not always the poor creature of the pessimists. One must, however, consider such cases as encouraging exceptions.

The cynical approach is obviously much more difficult in countries where democratic liberties are preserved and the people are well informed, than in countries where the élite is not worried by scruples, civil liberties are unknown, or, at best, a make-believe façade. The sense of anger and outrage among free citizens when they discover the double deals behind the scene, the real reasons which appear to inspire fateful decisions, particularly when they may have led to stalemate or defeat or catastrophe, can be as overpowering as a tropical hurricane and sweep everything before it. This is especially so in societies where the people are still committed to, or conditioned by, a moral or religious tradition.

It is almost impossible to hide forever from the citizenry the deceptions, ruses, machinations, subterfuges, and simple lies which, unfortunately, appear to be necessary, even in the best of democracies, to carry out an honourable policy with some hope of success. Abraham Lincoln pointed this out once, that one "could not fool all the people all the time," but implicitly admitted that short-term or partial deceptions were, if not acceptable, sometimes conceivable. Surely, he had learned one could not always conduct a victorious war without them.

MANY CAUSES FOR THE Americans' disappointing performance, disappointing to themselves above all, were already evident in the early '50s. Perhaps the goals were too ambitious, and inevitably so. Innate American apathy in international affairs tends always to be overcome by hysterical and hyperbolic rhetoric. Perhaps they had overestimated their own power, the patience and fortitude of their own people, and the terror their tools and tactics could inspire. Above all, they had gravely underestimated the envy, hostility, suspicion, fear, and misunderstanding all their moves could provoke. Furthermore, the fact that the times were abnormally fluid, troubled, and confused had not been taken into sufficient consideration.

Mad and irrational ideologies threatened world peace; simple expedients which had once been safely employed could not be depended on for long; plans had to be revised continually; technical advances transformed the strategic value of faraway places; some clusters of allied nations which the State Department had worked hard to put together might well have to be loosened or even dissolved. As the missiles could travel

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farther and farther with their deadly charges, more and more airbases all over the world became useless and the agreements with the local governments (usually expensively paid for) obsolete.

Then, of course, contemporary circumstances were so different from those faced by the Empires which had imposed their particular peace on the world in the past that precedents could seldom be used as guides—always supposing that Americans in the 1950s were inclined, or had the time, to learn from history. One of the few "cold wars" between East and West one could study in the past had been that between the Christian West and the Moslem East. Historical analogies are notoriously deceptive, but perhaps this much could have been learned from this ideological confrontation: it lasted for centuries; neither faith conquered the other in the end; whoever dominates the Mediterranean controls the European mainland (something the Romans and the English had also known); ideological confrontations often conceal other and less visible causes of rivalry; and Christian princes (including the King of France, the Republic of Venice, or the Pope himself) did not disdain allying themselves to the Sultan against their Christian brothers, from time to time, whenever it suited their interests. . . .

PREVIOUS EMPIRES HAVE BEEN able to rely on their overwhelming military superiority over more primitive enemies. The Persians had their cavalry, the Macedonians the phalanx, the Romans their wall-like legions, the Spaniards dominated their possessions with the unbeatable *Tercios*, the English and the Venetians cultivated naval power. The Americans, too, possessed an overwhelming superiority for a few brief years, the most overwhelming superiority of all times, but it was somehow impossible for them to make use of it. They were paralysed, aside from immediate circumstances or sagacious calculations, by their humane and moral inheritance. This also prevented them from using their superiority as a threat to gain diplomatic advantages; nobody believed they were capable of using the frightening new weapons, if the bluff were called, against any enemy who had not yet developed the same kind of explosive.

Previous Empires have been able to move freely and practically unobserved in a world without laws. They waged distant wars without the consent or approval of their own subjects, or any concern about international public opinion. Fleets at sea and armies on the field were not followed by swarms of critical and incredulous journalists and TV camera crews. Weaker enemies could be massacred or disreputable secret agreements concluded with no other worry than the possible verdict of future historians. Americans, on the other hand, were always forced to move gingerly, on tiptoe, looking to right and left, consulting everybody, allies and neutrals and opponents, observing as much as possible the decencies of international law and the Queensberry rules of war. Awkward diplomatic lies were soon found out, their innermost state secrets revealed to the world. It was proven time and again that it was against their very nature (in Lord Bryce's phrase) "to enslave people, to occupy territory," as it would be to drag defeated enemy chieftains in chains behind a conqueror's chariot down Pennsylvania Avenue. How else could one terminate wars and dominate the world? Could new ways be explored? Would they be successful?

IN ADDITION TO ALL THE historic and moral reasons which I have hurriedly sketched above (and there are many more) which made the United States unable to procure, once and for all time, for itself and all others, the beneficial effects of empire, and "everlasting *Pax Americana*" guaranteed by international law, there is another reason which I believe is worthy of notice. Americans were obligated almost overnight to tackle perhaps the most arduous problem in history: how to have the heroic pride of a guiltless conscience, be applauded and loved by everybody, and, at the same time, preserve the order of a world hegemony and do the occasionally nasty things necessary to enforce the law. Or, as the Italians say, how to "have a full barrel and a drunken wife."

Machiavelli pointed out long ago that this was not quite feasible. He argued that Christian morality did not hold in political affairs, and that any policy really based on the assumption (not the pretension) that it did, would end in disaster. Perhaps the Americans had not had the time to discover the practical impossibility of performing the task to their entire satisfaction without offending their official ideals. The burden had been dumped in their lap, practically without warning, at the end of the Second World War, for no other reason than there was nobody else around. Wasn't the United States the most powerful and successful nation in the world? Didn't it want peace? Then it had better get busy.

The dangers were so great, evident, and frightening, the new responsibilities so obviously unavoidable, that there was no opportunity for hesitation or yet another round of the historic debate between isolationists and interventionists. When Truman intervened in Iran and Greece and said, "I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities . . . We shall not realise our objectives

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unless we are willing to help people to maintain their free institutions," nobody was surprised. Nobody could read the appalling future implications concealed behind those excellent words. They simply seemed to confirm what everybody knew, believed, and accepted.

Nobody could realise at the time that the very origin of the Americans' power had not necessarily prepared them for its inevitable consequences. It had not taught them to conceive realistic world-wide strategic plans, or the art of making friends and influencing foreign peoples, of preserving peace (as the English had done) by always supporting the Number Two against the Number One, of dominating (as the Mafia sometimes successfully manages to do) without actually using force. The power of the United States ultimately came from an extraneous and irrelevant virtue, a knack it had developed in less than one hundred years, something which it excelled in and taught the world: the capacity to produce endless quantities of identical objects at low cost, to improve their design and efficacy untiringly, to transport them to wherever they happened to be needed.

The new responsibilities imposed (as the wars had done before) the rapid mobilisation of vast cadres, sometimes to be put to the test in a matter of weeks. This did not seem difficult, at the time, in a country which always believed good inexperienced men can take charge overnight of complex mechanisms and make them work successfully. It had taken previous Empires a century or two in order gradually to reach their apex, and it was time amply sufficient to cultivate the capable and prudent men, generals, admirals, proconsuls, merchants, diplomats, financiers, linguists, historians, jurists, politicians, ethnologists, and philosophers, who established precedents, made the errors, suffered the defeats, won the victories, and in the end developed the techniques necessary to cajole, seduce, intimidate, paralyse, placate, blackmail, defend, and sometimes educate and enrich dependent people.

THE AMERICANS COULD RELY only on a single generation with a few brilliant and skilled men. In the 1940s and '50s they had to make do with specialists in other fields (mainly the men who had studied, nursed and administered the growth of economic power, scientists, managers and professors) to advise politicians and determine profound policy lines. All of these experts had to tackle unprecedented problems *in vacuo*, abstractly, from zero. They had few guiding rules. They were compelled to play the whole thing by ear. They shut themselves up in think-tanks, like part-time Trappists in their cloisters. They developed new approaches, sometimes in a great hurry, to prevent the possible spread of epidemics, the outbreak of revolutions, or World War III. There was no other way. The job had to be done. The complex and ponderous jargon or the starry-eyed optimism with which these improvised consultants sometimes couched their concepts seldom concealed the fact that they were baffled and, sometimes, frightened.

Unfortunately, the best scientists, managers, and professors, in the United States as well as anywhere else, often reveal themselves as surprisingly inept, more inept than ordinary intelligent non-specialists, when dumped on unfamiliar ground to take on problems outside their competence. They fall easy victims to false analogies. They are tempted to oversimplify and distort complex imbroglios to make them seem understandable, principally in the hope of placating their own anxiety, sometimes translating everything into some sort of mathematical formula which could be digested by computers. They tend to perceive mainly the facts that confirm their prejudices or desires, often to rely on ready-made omnibus *en-tout-cas* schemata.

They naturally tend to dismiss confusing, irritating, irreconcilable, and inexplicable contradictions as irrelevant. They prefer to think of men as one sees them from tall buildings, uniform insects, or as aseptic statistics, rather than the sometimes erratic, pathetic, and inexplicable beings they reveal themselves when seen at close quarters. Above all, scientists, managers, and professors are accustomed to the sheltered laboratory, the fixed schedule, the well-defended office, the cloistered library, the tidy reports, the controlled conditions and the obsequious aides. They lack the humble skills of men who have to work with lackadaisical unpredictable nature, the skills so to speak, of sailors, fishermen, farmers, horse-tamers, the people who must at all cost avoid deceiving themselves and must develop prudence, patience, scepticism, resignation, as well as great fortitude and perseverance.

THESE ARE, OF COURSE, the qualities which statesmen must have or must acquire, as the materials they handle are not physical objects but natural phenomena. It is not by chance that the leaders of the Roman Republic and the men who built the British Empire had deep roots in country life. Similarly, most American Founding Fathers were the sons of farmers, sailors, or merchants, men fully aware of and prepared for the wanton ways of reality.

Incidentally, most of the American Fathers as well as the British (and naturally the Roman) leaders were familiar with Latin and Greek, imbued with the classical spirit, and knew how to trim sails to the winds of history and keep a watch for sudden storms. Our contemporary

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experts, particularly American, mostly brought up in contact with machinery, are tempted to believe—or to hope—that, once the proper coin is inserted in the proper slot, and the proper button pushed, the proper effect will follow. This makes them unreasonably despondent and desperate when the results are not what they expect from the premises and the calculations.

To all these limitations one must add a few typically American traits, common to academic specialists, clever technocrats, as well as the common people. They all believe (or struggle hard not to believe, at times) that treaties, written on good paper, signed by the right dignitaries, stamped, sealed, ratified, and exchanged, can be solid bulwarks against the unpredictable; that international bodies created by treaty can be unyielding dykes against the floods of history; that peace, in the end, would be better defended anywhere on earth by the good will of the people themselves, led by their legally elected leaders, than by craft, subterfuges, intimidation, blackmail, or massive armaments; that once men got to know each other better (by exchanging students, tourists, teachers, by sending politicians with their wives to visit their counterparts), they would discover there were few real differences between them, would come to fundamental agreements, consolidate the peace, and love one another.

THERE IS A MYSTERIOUS RIDDLE in all this, a contradiction foreigners seldom suspect exists and almost never study. Americans in the 1950s did not worry about it and shrugged their shoulders when it was mentioned. Why should the United States have been so severely paralysed (and is still often hampered), in the efficient and ruthless handling of international affairs, by its optimism *à tout prix*, its prejudices and preconceptions, mostly of a moral character, when these did not always interfere with the solution of internal problems? In other words, why did the same men behave soberly in their private lives, in business, and national affairs, as if they knew that reality was seldom what they wished it were, while they often were so disastrously trustful abroad?

Foreigners tend to conclude wrongly that Americans are naïve. They point out any number of well-known and undeniable facts. How often were Americans caught out by events? How many United States ambassadors have encouraged or determined the victory of a despicable and dangerous tyrant whom they believed to be a simple agrarian reformer or the Father of his Country, a local George Washington? How often has the State Department put its trust in an inviolable treaty, only to be surprised and chagrined when it was violated? How often have Americans been offended by the anti-American policy of a country which had been fed, developed, and made prosperous with American money? Why did they try to ignore the fact that there is no such thing as political gratitude and that one cannot buy friendship?

The myth that Americans have been and are incurably innocent, at all times and in all their endeavours, can be easily exploded. The United States is also the home of the Philadelphia lawyer, the horse-trader, the real estate developer, the second-hand car dealer, the professional gambler, the wooden nutmeg. Among the things Americans invented or improved are the poker game, financial shenanigans, the art of stock exchange speculation, the rackets, and all those ingenious petty swindles which are known in Italy as *truffe all'americana*.

Surely, few traces of naïvety or excessive trustfulness are to be found in American life. Secrecy, which is officially considered wicked (although necessary at times) in the conduct of foreign policy, has always been amply resorted to. Treaties signed with Indian tribes were seldom considered inviolable and sacred. Americans know that next-door neighbours who speak the same language and see each other all the time can hate each other's guts much more than people who speak different languages, live far apart, and seldom glimpse each other. Americans also know the good will of elected politicians cannot be trusted very far. No President in my memory was ever considered a *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, a great and far-seeing statesman by everybody, at least while he was alive. Every one of them was carefully watched at all times by a suspicious press.

It can also be proved that Americans did not always lack finesse in international affairs either, particularly when their vital interests were at stake. In 1797 a mission in Paris defeated the wily intrigues of Talleyrand (surely the most astute of all statesmen); Louisiana was bought from the French and Alaska from the Russians at bargain prices by the Americans who shrewdly exploited favourable political opportunities; the separation of Panama from Colombia was engineered with Bismarckian vigour by Theodore Roosevelt. Even the handling of international problems after World War II was not always or solely directed by starry-eyed idealism. In fact, a few of the American errors were provoked not by candid simplicity but by enthusiastic experimenting with crafty, Machiavellian schemes, as in the case of the Bay of Pigs or the backing of unnatural and ruinous political coalitions in foreign countries.

IN SPITE OF WHAT CRITICS SAY, both in the United States and in Europe, the American

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performance after World War II must be considered a success. It can be called a failure only in contrast with the excessive utopian hopes raised and the vast amounts of money spent. The nature of man has not been changed, to be sure, and the world is still an unhealthy and dangerous place in which to raise a family. Nevertheless, the big ultimate war, which many believed to be imminent and inevitable in the late 1940s and '50s, has not broken out; the earth has not been pulverised by nuclear explosions; humanity has not been reduced to a handful of ragged survivors; the few little wars which erupted here and there were isolated and sometimes smothered before they had grown dangerous; the Korean War (and now, perhaps, the Indo-Chinese war) was brought to an unsatisfactory but honourable end. At the same time, industry and international trade flourished practically everywhere; the primitive economy of backwater countries began laboriously to develop; colonial empires collapsed; the standard of living of almost every inhabitant of the globe has risen; prosperity, as it always does, has provoked social unrest but has prevented revolutions.

How much was all this the result of American planning and perseverance, the intelligence and foresight of its politicians, generals, and think-tank seers, and the product of mathematical formulas digested by computers? Diligent journalists could easily prove (and have often proved) all these by digging out the proper documents, facts, and testimonies. How much was success due, on the other hand, to the quite unintended and inevitable consequences of the country's disproportionate weight, wealth, and power? How much was it the product of historic forces or, as one's grandfathers used to say, the working of Providence? Is there some truth in the old saw, as in all saws, that God protects babies, drunks, and the United States?

It can be said that the *Pax Americana* arises from all these causes and many more besides, possibly from the same complex origins as the U.S.A.'s economic and military triumphs. All victories are the product of the collective behaviour of men facing crises, the test of their acceptance of their common ideals, the proof of the cohesion of society. The *Pax Americana,* likewise, can be considered the result, artless, artful, or both, of the Americans' own virtues, beliefs, and ancient hopes (or their conceptions of these things), including their eagerness to tackle problems to improve the world, and their deep assumption of being right. Success was helped, perhaps, by the very reluctance or lack of enthusiasm with which the people at times accepted their burden, a reluctance which made them cautious, willing to experiment, diffident of precedents, advice, and the lessons of history. On the other hand, it was made difficult by the traditional pragmatism of Americans, the trial-and-error method, which makes them confront events as they happen but seldom allows them to foresee what is coming; and their belief in "common sense" which helped baffle them whenever history showed itself immune to it. Henry Luce once impatiently told me in Rome: "I'm sick and tired of Italian problems. They can all be solved with a little common sense." Why nobody in Italy applied common sense to problems was, of course, the real problem which escaped him.

THE JOB WAS terrifying. The penalty for failure was hair-raising. How could one secure imperial results without becoming an Empire (in the traditional sense of the word) and remain uncontaminated by imperial vices? How could one secure peace without betraying one's honourable principles (or betraying them as rarely as possible)? How could one do all this while keeping the country on its course toward the vaunted future? How could one solve the world's problems without neglecting one's own; how spend all that money without bankrupting the economy? How could one secure cohesion and discipline while preserving the basic liberties of Americans?

Americans have struggled hard, disinterestedly, expensively, through grievous mistakes, failures, and catastrophes. They have slowly discovered that peace cannot be secured once and for all but must be defended daily, that treaties are *chiffons de papier,* and that it is not true that all men are like what Americans imagine themselves to be, but that they, the Americans, are unfortunately like all other men, frail and sinful, and condemned to Man's predicament.

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Rupert Rushbrooke

Three Poems

An Office Block

Tall suburban building,
Monstrosity of man,
Concrete, glass and plaster,
Love it if you can.
Everything is faster,
Buildings must be new,
High it goes into the sky,
People now are few.
Robots clatter in their place,
Steel head and metal face,
Cold precision, frigid eyes,
Large of brain and tall of size.
I suppose that they
Will control the office soon,
And that will be the day
Of a brighter, man-made moon,
And when it comes and Nature's dead,
Man's power will be too great.
His downfall comes,
I hear it tread,
He can't repent; too late.
Tall suburban building,
Monstrosity of man,
Concrete, glass and plaster,
Love it if you can!

The Maker of my Acre

The maker of my acre
Was really very kind,
The hand that made my land
My life has also signed.
Yet even church I do not search,
I do not really mind,
For the eye that sees me die
Is the one that I must find.

He's Not Breathing

There's a man lying down on the ground,
So there is; look what we've found,
I hope he's all right; quick, hold his head,
He's not breathing, I think he's dead.
Don't be silly; a dead man here?
Look at his eyes, so calm and clear.
He tripped and fell, I would have said,
But he's not breathing, I think he's dead.
I'll go for help, you stay here,
I'll be back in a second, never fear.
Nine, nine, nine, ambulance please,
There's a man here, sir, under the trees,
He's unconscious and he needs a bed.
Or maybe a coffin in case he's dead.
The birds in the tree looked down aghast,
For they had just seen what had passed,
The ambulance came, clanging its bell,
It was very fast which was just as well.
My friend and I went with the man,
But when we arrived in the back of the van,
The doctor in the hospital said,
"He's not breathing, this man is dead."

RUPERT RUSHBROOKE, who is 15½, is a pupil at Wellington College.

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Two Poems

Special Delivery

Alone and at three
a.m. felt the first
twinge but thought
it something I ate
(cucumbers especially
big ones do that,
also radishes), but
at four a.m. the waters
broke ran for a towel
to sponge the sheets
(what would my wife
say?) at five a.m.
the rhythms started
regular as Lawrence Welk.

At six o'clock called
my doctor but he didn't
believe. Call my mother's
answering service but she
didn't. At six thirty
called a taxi but it
didn't, and at eight
on the button open as
a bellows, clutching
the bedpost, screaming
between gold inlays,
a duck squeezing out
a Macy's Thanksgiving
parade balloon, gave birth
to an eight-pound blue-
-eyed bouncing baby
poem. Spanked it to life.
Lay back and had a drink.

P.S.
Two hours later,
it died. You know
how it is with poems.
(My last one had two
heads and no heart.)

Robert Phillips

The Long War

In the remote islands of the Philippines
There are bands of Japanese soldiers
Who do not know the war is over.

Living in caves or huts of thatched leaves,
Eating berries or stealing rice from the farmers,
Hiding whenever they see the enemy.

Surely the Japanese must send envoys
Into the jungle, to rescue these ancients—
Saying, "Come back, come back home with
honour,

The Emperor is still alive and in good health,
The Kabuki theatre is thriving, and *haiku*
Continue to be written in every decent household.

The country is far more prosperous than of old—
Thanks to you. See, a book by a foreigner,
Mr Herman Kahn, on Japan the Superstate—

In short, the war is over . . .
Did we win it? It cannot really be said
That we lost it.

Our soldiers were in the field
Long after all the others had laid aside
Their arms and gone to their homes."

Will they believe it, I wonder,
Will they believe it?

D. J. Enright

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Michael Burn

A Disappointment

Mr Sulzbacher was disappointed in this author.
I too. We'd been so sure. Sulzbacher ordered
A farm in New Hampshire, and Mrs Kramp and I
Reserved for a summer in Venice. This author seemed
Possessed, shall I say?, of a sensitivity
Uncommon today, a freshness. He lived in the country.
When he came to town he called it "a huge bazaar,
Like Constantinople." No one had ever said that;
Or not in our hearing. We saw ourselves on cushions,
Doing something with sherbet. In the outer office
Miss Jackson's eyes turned almond, and all Manhattan
Withdrew behind a yashmak.
We have a superior list, but we were waiting. . . .
This *must* be the promised one.

He began with a project about Emily Dickinson.
She was, as he termed it, just making the swing-doors.
The draft had an innocence, a kind of sort of
Adamant tenderness (he named it so himself).
By the time he had finished, Emily Dickinson
Was out on the sidewalk again. His next, an elegy,
Was moving about Grant's Tomb. It took three years.
I won't trouble you with the rest, except to say
He possessed that gift, amounting almost to genius,
Of knowing when the wind of favour would veer,
And of getting his sails up just in the nick of time
To see it veer back again. Everything he composed
Gleamed with that youthfulness very rare in our day.
If we detected sometimes a trace of flatness,
He assured us it was deliberate. He taught us much
About the power of the monosyllable to depress.
Thinking about it, I could not have faced the subway,
Had it not been for the lift of the long U's,
Elided I's and agitation of female endings.
Vowels, he said, were flowers; consonants, railroads
(T's going west, M's east). Punctuation, he said,
Is a poet's Morse. We thought that beautiful.
He was great on assonance. It was great to be taking around
A man in whom you could *sense* the internal rhymes.
We wished only that speech, when it came, fell faster
On to the page. His lines on Paul Valéry in Harlem. . .
There were only two . . . took a year. His first wife
Walked out after his first lyric, and he withdrew it.
We tried to understand, though once he had told us
That a poet's pen is dipped in his tears (a sentiment
Later transferred to rhyme).

There were no hard feelings.
He kept to the end that unpolluted quality.
After the advance he never spoke about money.
We did not ask it back, having ourselves been touched
By something of his spiritual deodorant,
If I may put it so, as indeed he put it.

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He died while still composing his own epitaph.
Now we no longer take fog-horns for the muezzin.
Miss Jackson's eyes have gone back to blackcurrant.
And by the time we get something from the afterworld,
I fear religious belief will be out again.
In due course a memoir will be in the bookshops,
Though not published by Sulzbacher and Kramp.
He used to say one should not be subject to fashion,
But one has to live. Sulzbacher has no country home.
Mrs Kramp and I are spending the summer in Brooklyn.

For the Common Market

It's easy to be witty in French.
You don't have to know French well.
Think of those French expressions (this is the secret). . . .
Goût du néant, esprit de l'escalier,
Dégoût de la vie, nostalgie de la boue,
Adieu suprême des mouchoirs.
All you have to do is take two nouns,
Any old nouns, the iller-assorted the better,
And couple them with a genitive,
Shrug, throw your hands out (not too far),
In a French sort of way,
And give the casual knowing look of someone
Who knows the girl at the bar.
Try it and see. . . .
With faint disdain . . . c'est un sentiment de vestiaire,
Amour de boulanger, fantaisie du lavabo,
Goût de Londres, tendresse des wagons-lits,
Or sighing
Les aurevoirs de Vendredi.
Everyone will say how well you know French.
I've tried it on Frenchmen, and I know.

In German just couple the words together,
Like any old strangers meeting in any old street. . . .
Himmelschnabel Apfelpudel Heldenbegeisterung Weltkrebs . . .
No one will know any better.

In Italian it will be helpful to know the first line of Dante,
And also, brushing away a tear,
"Italia, Italia, terra di morti",
And go straight on to business.

I will advise later about the Scandinavian countries.

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THEATRE

Philistinism, Good & Bad

By John Weightman

MR ROBERT BRUSTEIN, a visiting American critic, recently complained in *The Observer* that the English theatre was in the doldrums again, and implied that he would be glad when his London assignment was over. Having, after a pause, taken up my critical pen once more, in response to the clamorous demand of the three members of my fan-club, I see his point. A critic longs to find a theme; he wants to have the sensation of discovering something new, of espousing a cause or fighting a wrong tendency; in short of shedding the light of rationality in a worthwhile manner on an evolving situation. He may, of course, have no illusions about his relevance or effectiveness—after all, what is a critic but someone who, to relieve his feelings and organise his ideas, produces a form of secondary literature about primary art?—but he likes his parasitism to be attached to a lively, kicking beast which seems to be going in some direction or other. At this precise moment, the English theatre is heading nowhere. After the conquests of permissiveness and commercialised godliness—imported, in any case, from America—nothing very definite appears to be happening. The theatre of protest and alienation is a thing of the past. The theatre of the absurd has infiltrated the commercial theatre and evaporated. Experimentalism has retreated into the background. *The Mousetrap* is in its twenty-first proud year, and I count nine other shows, of different kinds and comparable merit, which have been running for two, three or four years in the same theatres. If this tendency spreads, most theatre performances will become as immutable as Punch and Judy. We are certainly in a lull, but perhaps lulls are normal and only critics expect a new genius or a new departure every other month.

Since there is no obvious centre of interest, I have behaved like a tourist spending a fortnight in London; I have visited seven theatres more or less at random to sample the fare. I went in turn to *Time and Time Again* by Alan Ayckbourn, *Lloyd George Knew My Father* by William Douglas Home, the revival of *Journey's End*, *I and Albert*, the new musical directed by John Schlesinger, *A Pagan Place* by Edna O'Brien, *Hulla Baloo*, a review with Jimmy Edwards, and the revival of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience* by the Sadler's Wells Opera.

There are various ways of sorting out this mixed bag to make my report to Sirius. To begin with the immediate impression of quality, the revivals, *Journey's End* and *Patience*, were without a doubt much better than anything else, both in substance and performance. On both occasions one came out of the theatre with that rare feeling of having experienced something solid and complete, impeccably executed in every detail. On the other hand, both *Journey's End* and *Patience* strike me as being basically philistine, in a sense that I shall try to define in a moment. The only non-philistine work on my list is *A Pagan Place*, although it is no more than a slight and rather defective series of sketches. At the very bottom of the scale of philistinism is *Hulla Baloo*, a review whose décor is a public lavatory; on the analogy of café-theatre, one wonders why it was not performed directly in the Gent's at Piccadilly Circus, which is only a few yards away. Occupying a middle place, but quite a long way below *Journey's End* and *Patience*, are the two commercial comedies and the ramshackle musical about Queen Victoria.

ANOTHER GRID that can be applied is class distinction. Douglas Home's *Lloyd George Knew My Father* is post-prandial upper-middle-class theatre with anarchistic overtones. Most of the people in the stalls at the Savoy Theatre had dined in the Savoy Hotel and were spending the night in London to attend the ceremony of the Order of the Bath the next morning. Nearest to this is *Journey's End*, which might be defined as the end of the road for the public school spirit. It is organised in terms of the last serious phase of the gentlemanly ethos: *victor ludorum*, hero-worship, the coward who lets the side down, the temporary gentleman who is decent though crass and the sterling, limited working-class types of the cook and the sergeant—all bound together by unspoken patriotism and understatement. *Time and Time Again* is lower-middle-class, with Tom Courtenay as a faint echo of the alienated hero conversing with garden gnomes and being poetically appealing although poor at suburban cricket. *Patience* may have begun in 1881 as a show for the middle-class or perhaps the upper-middle-class, but by now I think it is mainly middle-class and lower-middle-class; one might even say that Gilbert and Sullivan provided the only form of native art, apart from gardening,

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that ever fully entered into the lower-middle-class English soul. The Coliseum is a vast theatre, almost every seat was taken, and one had the impression that the audience knew the work as well as the performers did, and had probably sung it time and time again in amateur theatricals. *Hulla Baloo* is for the Poujadist *Lumpen-bourgeoisie*, who think that niggers are niggers (except when they are lithe and sexy like Chelsea Brown), and who are coarsely amused by transvestism. *A Pagan Place* is outside the English system, in the folksiness and degenerate universalism of the Irish Catholic Church. *I and Albert* depends on the glamour of royalty, which covers all classes, but, like *A Pagan Place*, it is really outside the domain of Englishness, since it is a quite synthetic product of international show-business.

ANOTHER CLASSIFICATION could be by genres. Is each work a pure example of its kind, or does it represent a significant or non-significant variation? *Patience* and *I and Albert* are musicals; they belong to a hybrid form which tries to balance singing and dramatic interest, but the first is coherent within its terms of reference, while the second is incoherent. Gilbert and Sullivan are mildly satirising the aestheticism of the late 19th century, and they make fun of Wilde, Swinburne, Burne-Jones and Co., as if the decadents were just rather precious young men who had found a modish way of attracting female adulation; that is, they disinfect them, remove any trace of true decadence and build entirely on a concept of niceness, exactly as P. G. Wodehouse, another very English type, was to do later in his satires. Granted this premise, everything in *Patience* is beautifully organised. Bunthorpe and Grosvenor are rival narcissists in green velvet knee-breeches and pink *hauts-de-chausses*; Patience flutes with milk-white purity; Lady Jane, ripe, dark, buxom and contralto, identifies with her 'cello, another buxom contralto; the twenty love-sick maidens sway and swoon in pale, pre-Raphaelite hues, while the army is testily erect in red and gold. All this is perfect, and the production is an absolute model of its kind. The philistinism arises from the fact that no hint of genuine evil is present behind the comedy or in the music, as it is, say, in Mozart or even in the impishness of Offenbach. Therefore, in the last resort, Gilbert and Sullivan achieve an emasculated or unsalted perfection. But *I and Albert* is a great big *machine*, which achieves nothing at all, either dramatically or musically. It evolves no consistent attitude towards Victoria (although Polly James, by some personal miracle, manages to have an interesting presence throughout). The one good thing in the show is Lewis Fiander's brilliant presentation of Disraeli as a conjuror performing before the Queen; but it is out of key with the rest, because if Victoria is rendered more or less seriously, Disraeli cannot simply be turned into a figure of fun. You cannot have Offenbach suddenly erupting into *The Sound of Music*.

TRADITIONALLY, musical reviews combined satire, sentiment, and an occasional dash of patriotism. Perhaps it is significant that *Hulla Baloo* misses out the sentiment, replaces satire by bisexual smut and lavatory jokes, but keeps a little vinegary patriotism mixed with racialism. I think Mr Enoch Powell ought to attend a performance at the Criterion to see the sort of people who respond noisily when his name is chanted as a slogan. He might find that even Ugandan Asians would make more welcome guests at Eaton Place. How some distinguished names came to be associated with this review is a mystery to me. The crude manipulation of evil, as if it were not defiling and explosive, is infinitely more philistine than the too nice elimination of evil.

With Edna O'Brien's *A Pagan Place*, although it contains many references to the flesh, we are poles apart from *Hulla Baloo*, in a true artistic universe where the writer is committing herself to all the details of her vision and trying to hold the contradictory facts of life in perspective. Miss O'Brien is a fashionable figure on the London scene; but paradoxically, what she is exploiting is the rather archaic atmosphere of rural Ireland and the charm of Catholicism, not believed in but used as a seasoning and an institutional support. Any village is a microcosm, and Miss O'Brien is adept at showing, through the eyes of a girl, the cultural backwardness, the mixture of good and bad in the characters, and the humanity of the rustic situation that one can both appreciate and wish to escape from. The work is gently moving, as far as it goes; but it lacks theatrical power and a convincing conclusion, since it seems unlikely that a heroine who has Miss O'Brien's own sharp perceptiveness would seek escape by way of a nunnery.

Journey's End, *Time and Time Again* and *Lloyd George Knew My Father* are meant to be "well-made plays", but only the first is entirely successful. In the second, Mr Ayckbourn tries to develop a Hamlet-like character who is tragi-comically at odds with his surroundings through his concealed spiritual delicacy, but he cannot sustain him beyond Act I, because he has just borrowed him from the theatre of alienation without having any philosophical framework in

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which to set him. The play makes an amusing vehicle for Tom Courtenay and the supporting cast for the first hour and then collapses about their ears. Similarly, Mr Douglas Home tried to build on a central character, an indomitable upper-middle-class lady who is going to commit suicide in protest against the driving of a by-pass through her grounds. Taking a hint from the black humour of the theatre of the absurd, he has her discuss the funeral arrangements in a matter-of-fact way and with splendid English dottiness. But neither she nor Mr Douglas Home really believes in the protest, which is pure sleight-of-hand to get the play going and then is reversed at the end in a terrible let-down, for which the author ought to be reprimanded by the Playwrights Union. Ralph Richardson and Celia Johnson go through their usual routines with lovable predictability, and that is all there is to it.

ACCORDING TO THE PROGRAMME, *Journey's End*, curiously enough, was written almost accidentally to earn money for Sherriff's boat-club. This seems appropriate for the genesis of such a dyed-in-the-wool English work. Precisely, perhaps, because it was put together for such an innocently financial purpose, it is emotionally balanced from start to finish, whereas if it had been written earlier and as a deliberately anti-war play, the tone might have been strained. The horror of the First World War, so different in its messy reality from the principles of gentlemanliness, is beautifully expressed. But once again, the missing element, in default of which non-philistine art seems impossible, is metaphysical intelligence or awareness. Sherriff puts everything perfectly into position *within* the public-school ethos. He doesn't see, or doesn't suggest, anything beyond that system, except that the Germans might be jolly good fellows, if this beastly war wasn't in progress. But even this is within the system, because the Germans are just the other side, and shells have unaccountably replaced the rugger-ball, without the game itself ever really being called into question. However, it would be wrong to sound condescending. If this was the truth for a large part of his generation, Sherriff objectified it with great conscious, or unconscious, theatrical skill. The play works as a play; it is not just a document, as Shaw, with unusual obtuseness, said it was. On its own level it is no doubt immortal.

IT IS NOT SURPRISING that revivals should seem better than most contemporary plays. A revival is by definition something which, whether truly good, partly good, or good in a bad way, has transcended its period of creation, whereas at all times the bulk of the current output is doomed to join that body of theatrical literature which moulders away in silence, when it is not disturbed by some occasional researcher. Plays die very easily, and dead plays are even more poignant than dead novels, because as one turns the yellowing pages in the libraries one hears the ghostly bustle of vanished theatrical evenings, and one wonders how they could ever have been justified by the now extinct text. In the theatre, I often have the impression that I am watching something which is already half-dead but is being kept alive by good will, artificial respiration or a whim of the collective mood. Take *The Mousetrap*, for instance; I cannot express an opinion about it, because I saw it years ago and it left absolutely no impression on me whatsoever. But when it ends its first phenomenal run, will it have any chance of ever being revived again, except in amateur theatricals? I guess not, but some Ph.D. student will muse over it during a drowsy afternoon, wondering about all those audiences with their chocolates and coffee-trays and the successive teams of departed actors.

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MUSIC

Toscanini & His Critics

By B. H. Haggin

THE ENGLISH CRITIC W. J. Turner, who is known widely as the author of *Mozart: The Man and His Works*, wrote other excellent books on Beethoven and Wagner, and one on Berlioz which in 1934 established the truth about this man and his works that Jacques Barzun sixteen years later claimed to establish, and actually did not establish, with his pretentious *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*. Also, for twenty-five years Turner reviewed musical events regularly in *The New Statesman* and occasionally elsewhere; and a reader recently sent me an article in *The Illustrated London News* of 20 May 1939, which has great interest today.

The occasion for the article was a series of Beethoven concerts conducted by Toscanini; and Turner began by pointing out the supremacy of Italy in European music until "the astounding flowering of German music in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries", which made it possible to believe Germany now "had the monopoly of the great and sublime musical thinkers, while the music of Italy was altogether of a lighter character." It also came to be believed "that only in Germany and by German musicians could the profundities of the great German classical masters be understood and interpreted"—in support of which could be cited the many musical performers, including the great conductors from Hans von Bülow on, who were German. But "then, suddenly, there appeared an astonishing phenomenon—Toscanini. The idea that an Italian musician who had studied exclusively in Italy could understand and interpret German masters such as Beethoven and Wagner seemed ludicrous to the average German musician and music-lover." Turner recalled a letter from an Austrian friend about Toscanini's first appearances in Vienna and the bewildered astonishment of the Viennese at "an Italian conductor who shows us things in Beethoven and Wagner that we Germans never heard before." It was inexplicable, said Turner, only for those who believed in essential national differences in musical genius, not for those who realised that genius was not national, and that "it is just this universality, this passing beyond national frontiers, which marks an outstanding genius." For Turner there was no doubt that Toscanini was such an outstanding genius among interpretative musicians: without detracting from the merits and qualities of fine conductors like Nikisch, Weingartner, Richard Strauss, Bruno Walter, Furtwängler, Klemperer, he would say Toscanini was a unique phenomenon.

This view, it must be pointed out, was Turner's response not merely to Toscanini's Beethoven performances of 1939: it was what he had been led to by all the Toscanini performances he had heard in the years since Toscanini's first concerts in London with the New York Philharmonic in 1930—years in which Turner had developed his remarkably accurate perceptions on those first occasions. In December 1929 Turner had written of a Furtwängler performance of Beethoven's Fifth with the Berlin Philharmonic:

> These extraordinary pianissimos, these marvellously manipulated accelerandos, ritardandos and crescendos can absolutely get in the way of the music when they are all produced for the sake of effect, as a piece of showmanship.... On this occasion [Furtwängler and his orchestra] were quite obviously displaying their virtuosity to the disadvantage of the music.

And a few months later, after Toscanini's first concert with the New York Philharmonic, Turner had written:

> What distinguished this performance of the Haydn symphony [No. 101, *Clock*] from a performance of a Haydn symphony by Furtwängler and the Berlin Philharmonic... not long ago was its absolute directness.... No conductor I have heard has succeeded in achieving such virtuosity and in keeping it always subservient to a purely musical intention. There is in Toscanini's conducting no trace whatever... of display or showmanship or self-consciousness. It is absolutely direct.

And with this directness, said Turner, there was a profound musical sense. "The basis of music is rhythm . . . and what a beautiful, clear and vital rhythmic structure Toscanini made of Haydn's symphony!" Here already was a perception of what Turner continued to be struck by in subsequent performances, and what—in his article on

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the Beethoven performances of 1939—he described in the statement that Toscanini's "intellectual grasp of the musical structure of the work he is conducting is unique", and in this concluding statement:

> It is also a great mistake to think that Toscanini keeps strictly to metronomic time. One of his greatest virtues is his subtle variation of tempo; but always in the service of shape, and the shape is derived from the rightful expression of the music. It is in discovering this rightful expression and hence the perfect shape that Toscanini is supreme among living conductors.

Thus Turner, thirty years ago, discussed and clarified an important issue which has come up again recently: whether the music of, say, Beethoven has a specifically German character which requires a specifically German style of performance for its realisation, and whether therefore the music is best understood and performed by a German conductor; and he did this with remarkably perceptive statements about the work of the two conductors with whom the recent discussion of the issue has been concerned —Furtwängler and Toscanini.

WHAT TURNER DISCOVERED after hearing Toscanini in Europe in the 1930s—that among the great conductors of the century he was unique—had been recognised in New York when Toscanini had conducted at the Metropolitan Opera, from 1908 to 1915; and it continued to be generally believed in the years from 1926 to 1954 in which he conducted the New York Philharmonic and the NBC Symphony. And it was discovered by the other Europeans who heard first his concerts with the New York Philharmonic in 1930 and then his performances with European orchestras until the outbreak of war in 1939. Turner's friend reported in his letter the effect on the Viennese of Toscanini's work with the Vienna Philharmonic in Vienna and Salzburg from 1933 to 1937; and I can add the recollection of the orchestra's chairman, Hugo Burghauser, that after its years with Weingartner, Strauss, Bruno Walter, Furtwängler, Klemperer, "the orchestra, with Toscanini, realised that this was the climax of every musician's experience."

THE FIRST AUTHORITATIVE VOICE of dissent in the United States was that of Virgil Thomson, when he became music critic of the New York *Herald Tribune* in 1940. It was made authoritative by the equipment of perception and judgment which—on the occasions when Thomson was content to apply it to what was actually presented to his ears—produced accurate reports and evaluations that were the only American newspaper writing on music worth reading. But on many occasions Thomson found it more interesting to spin fancy ideas about things made up in his head—not only more interesting to himself but more impressive to his readers, an important consideration for Thomson, who was conscious of his own performance in a review and concerned with its effect—on occasion its shock effect—on his audience. On the one hand, then, he achieved the shock effect with reviews of recitals by Heifetz and Horowitz in which he evaluated correctly the performances he described accurately (by which I mean that he described what one recognised as the playing of Heifetz or Horowitz). But what Thomson described as Toscanini's performances, on the other hand—the performances in which Toscanini, "like Mendelssohn . . . quite shamelessly whip[ped] up the tempo and sacrifice[d] clarity and ignore[d] basic rhythm"—had no resemblance to the actual performances conducted by Toscanini that one had heard: they existed only in Thomson's imagination. And this was true also of what he said about them. As against "the marriage of historical and literary with musical culture" in performance which Thomson said had been transmitted from Wagner through "von Bülow, Nikisch and Beecham", Toscanini offered "disembodied music and disembodied theatre" without "personal poetry" or "historical evocation"—music reduced by "streamlining" to "essential outline" for the purpose of "purely auditory excitement." One of Thomson's explanations for this way of dealing with music was the poor eyesight that he said compelled Toscanini to memorise the scores he couldn't read at the concert.

> When one memorizes everything, one acquires a great awareness of music's run-through. One runs it through in the mind constantly; and one finds in that way a streamlined rendering that is wholly independent of detail and even of specific significance, a disembodied version that is all shape and no texture. Later, in rehearsal, one returns to the texture; and one takes care that it serve always as neutral surfacing for the shape. For shape is what any piece is always about that one has memorized through the eye and the inner ear. Playing a piece for shape and run-through gives . . . the most exciting effect that can ever be produced.

And in conversation once Thomson gave me another explanation: that having been a conductor of opera until the age of fifty, and having at that age had to conduct the symphonic repertory with no knowledge of its traditions, Toscanini had solved the problem by "streamlining" the music.

WHAT THOMSON WAS DOING in all this was using impressive-sounding language to put across imagined points about imagined facts. This I can demonstrate even though after thirty years I still don't know what some of the impressive-sounding

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words refer to and can't discover coherent sense in some of the impressive-sounding statements. "The marriage of historical and literary with musical culture" reverberates grandly as an idea, but it is an idea that I can't relate to a performance of a symphony of Mozart or Beethoven; an idea that Thomson didn't derive from the actual performances of Wagner, von Bülow and Nikisch, which he didn't hear; and an idea that I didn't find demonstrated in the actual performances of Beecham, which Thomson did hear. What a Beecham performance presented to my ears was a pacing and shaping of the symphony in accordance with his general sense for musical shape embodying expressiveness, and his sense for the particular shape embodying the particular expressiveness of the particular symphony. And that was what I heard also in Toscanini's performance. The shape he gave the symphony was different from Beecham's; but it was a shape embodying the work's expressiveness, not the streamlined reduction to essential outline without texture, detail and specific significance which Thomson described. After thirty years I still don't see why running through a piece of music in one's mind must produce the result Thomson said it must; and I still can't get any precise idea of "a streamlined rendering . . . wholly independent of detail and even of specific significance", or "a disembodied version that is all shape and no texture", or a texture which is "neutral surfacing for the shape." But apart from this the fact is that Toscanini away from the podium did *not* constantly run through a piece of music in his mind: he constantly read it in the score, and in this unending study of the score was concerned largely with clarity of texture. "I try everything," he said once, shaking his head dejectedly as he pointed to the bassoon part at one point in the score of Beethoven's *Consecration of the House* Overture, "but I am afraid I will never hear these bassoons." And an NBC Symphony musician recalled how, back on the podium, Toscanini would have "just, let's say, the second clarinet and third horn and violas—inner voices— . . . play alone", and make them "sing as if they were thematic, and then incorporate them with the rest of the orchestral texture", and "how beautiful the whole thing became." This clarity of texture he gave to a shape filled with significant detail, which was, in Turner's words, "derived from the rightful expression of the music".

It was in Thomson's imagination, again, that Toscanini began to conduct symphonic music at fifty with no knowledge of its traditions. In fact, exactly like his Central European contemporaries, he began to conduct it a few years after he had begun to conduct opera, when he was twenty-eight; and like them he continued to conduct both thereafter. At his first concert in Turin in March 1896 his programme included Schubert's great C-major; at later concerts that spring he conducted Haydn, Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky. He began, then, exactly like his Central European contemporaries, with knowledge of the symphonic literature—knowledge which he had acquired in the same way as they: from the performances he had heard and his study of the scores. Moreover the performances had included those of German conductors: talking in 1944 about the details he had changed in his performance of Beethoven's *Eroica* a few days earlier, he said, "Forty years ago when I play *Eroica* the first time I hear German conductors—I hear Richter—and I think I must play this German music as they play it. . . . But when I play this symphony later I play more and more as I feel; and now I have courage at last to take right tempo."

And so when Toscanini conducted Beethoven's Ninth at the Metropolitan in 1913 Richard Aldrich did not write in *The Times* that it had been the performance of an opera conductor with no knowledge of the traditions of the symphonic repertory who had solved his problem by streamlining the work. Instead he wrote:

> He revealed in the fullest measure the qualities of the great symphonic conductor. . . . Mr. Toscanini met in an unusual degree Wagner's criterion of the *melos*, of keeping unbroken the essential melodic line. . . . In all the nuances of the performance the melodic line was not interrupted; nor in all the plastic shaping of the phrase was the symmetry of the larger proportion of the organic unit of the whole lost sight of. It was rhythmically of extraordinary vitality. . . . There were subtle and significant modulations of tempo, but never of a disturbing sort.

And these words described the later performances of the Ninth with the New York Philharmonic and NBC Symphony that I heard.

VIRGIL THOMSON was not the only one who dealt in inventions. In him it was the aberration of a critic capable of accurate perception; but for most writers, who cannot hear correctly what is presented to their ears, such inventions are normal practice enabling them to impress their readers with demonstrations of the perception they lack. Thus, in an article, "The Meaning of Toscanini," in *The Saturday Review of Literature* of 25 March 1950 imagined distinctions between imagined Toscanini performances provided Irving Kolodin with material for such pronouncements as "He has lived, it seems to me, by a credo in which the explicit yields the implicit. This may be satisfactory in Wagner, a very explicit composer, or Strauss, an even more explicit one; it leaves considerable areas of doubt in Mozart and

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Haydn"; or "At best, this seems to me a reassurance that Toscanini, superior as he is to the common mould, is yet within it. For a stiff 'Magic Flute' Overture there is a superbly flexible 'Freischütz', for an overwrought 'Leonore No. 3' a wonderfully proclamatory 'Meistersinger'."

I DON'T RECALL any other dissenting voices during the last years of Toscanini's activity; and as long as his performances continued to be heard not even the attacks of an authoritative figure like Thomson produced any change in the public's long-held belief that Toscanini towered above all other conductors. It was not until some years after his disappearance from the public scene, when his greatness was no longer an immediate reality but only a legend, that doubt and attack could be effective. And in this attack the first authoritative voice to take note of is that of the late George Szell, who provided confirmation of what an NBC Symphony musician wrote me a few years ago: "It is a sad truth that many of the conductors who were adumbrated by Toscanini's brilliance have never forgiven him his greatness." Szell, speaking of Toscanini, clearly thought of himself as being now, with Toscanini dead, the Olympian figure Toscanini had been when alive—an Olympian who could point out inadequacies and defects and failures of his predecessor. Actually, however, what he revealed was his own un-Olympian limitations of taste, perception and understanding, and his factual inaccuracy.

Thus, in one of the articles in the issue of *The Saturday Review* commemorating the Toscanini centenary in 1967 Szell wrote that the orchestral execution in Toscanini's performances with the New York Philharmonic in 1930 "set new, undreamed-of standards" for Europeans, but "we were baffled by certain aspects of interpretation, especially what seemed some relentlessly overdriven tempi," of which Szell's examples included the Allegretto of Beethoven's Seventh, the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, and the fifth of the Brahms-Haydn Variations. But if one listened to the performances of these that Toscanini recorded with the Philharmonic one heard that the tempo of the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh was the *allegretto* Beethoven prescribed, which, though understandably surprising to ears accustomed to the traditional slow tempo, was not in the least over-driven; and that the seemingly effortless lightness of the other two performances, in addition to their breathtaking swiftness, made them the marvels they had always been thought to be.

WITH RESERVATIONS, THEN, about Toscanini's interpretations, Szell contended—in a published conversation with Paul Henry Lang in the January 1965 issue of *High Fidelity*—that Toscanini nevertheless had to be credited with having "rectified many, many arbitrary procedures of a generation of conductors before him"; and in the Bell Telephone commemorative telecast in 1967 he again considered Toscanini's main achievement to have been this "ethical" one of rectifying the arbitrariness of earlier conductors. But in his *Saturday Review* article, though once more Toscanini had provided "a heaven-sent corrective" for the "mannerism and excess" into which the style inaugurated by Wagner had degenerated in the subjective interpretations of his successors, Szell now added that "the cure seemed sometimes a little drastic for the ailment," since it ruled out "spontaneous deviation from the pre-established plan [*i.e.* of the rehearsals] . . . the 'spur of the moment', and with it the grace of the moment." But Toscanini, in eliminating the distortions, was not ruling out what actually could not be ruled out—the slight deviations at the concert from what had been achieved at the rehearsal; and if, again, one listened to his performances on records, one heard the characteristic grace of the moment which no phrase conducted by Toscanini was without. Moreover his performances were being faulted for lacking grace by a man whose own performances of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert were completely graceless.

In addition Szell pointed out inadequacies and defects in Toscanini's technical operation as a conductor. His baton technique was completely adequate for the "meticulously prepared performances" he gave; but lacking the Central European conductor's schooling in the repertory system that required the conducting of insufficiently rehearsed performances, Toscanini was unprepared to deal with an emergency like the one created by the suddenly unnerved Queen of the Night in the performance of *The Magic Flute* that Szell had heard in Salzburg in 1937. But I, who also heard that performance of *The Magic Flute*, retained for years afterwards the recollection of how efficiently Toscanini had dealt with that emergency. Moreover Szell considered Toscanini's way of rehearsing "not very efficient or methodical", since it rarely included "analytical verbal instruction." Toscanini

> would sing a phrase, berate the dull-minded or insensitive, ask angrily for the repeat of a whole section or movement (not always with improvement) and thereafter whip the orchestra into such a state of tension and fear that all of a sudden, magically, perhaps hypnotically, they did exactly his bidding without knowing how and why.

This disdainful description revealed Szell's inability to understand the rehearsal technique that NBC Symphony musicians considered not

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only exemplary but more efficient than that of any other conductor. One thing they approved of was Toscanini's insistence on communicating his wishes to the orchestra not with words but with the movements of his baton, which the musicians fully understood and preferred to the "verbal instruction" orchestral players hate. Another was Toscanini's practice of playing through a section or entire movement, and possibly playing through it a second time, so that, as one musician said, "we began to get a feeling of line, of continuity—instead of stopping every two bars, [as] with some conductors"; and it was only after this feeling for the continuity of the whole had been achieved that Toscanini began to stop "for little things—to get them exactly the way he wanted them." Szell, it must be added, was the conductor who "stop[ped] every two bars"—who actually had done this at his first rehearsal with the NBC Symphony of Beethoven's *Eroica* in 1941, and who could not possibly, in the twenty-five years since then, have forgotten his humiliating experience in the greenroom after the rehearsal, when Toscanini had berated him indignantly for a method of rehearsal that he considered mistreatment of the orchestra, and Szell had apologised abjectly. It seems probable, therefore, that what Szell wrote about Toscanini in his article represented not only his inflated estimate of himself in 1967 but the ineradicable recollection of his humiliation in 1941.

WHAT CONTRIBUTED TO Szell's inflated estimate of himself was the undiscriminating estimates of him in the press, which credited him not only with the impressive technical powers that were evident in the marvellous playing of his Cleveland Orchestra, but with the equally impressive musical powers that were not evident in the boring performances of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven and Schubert he produced with that orchestra. Especially authoritative were the statements of Winthrop Sargeant in *The New Yorker*—not only that Szell was "the Old Master, the guardian of tradition, the vehicle of its communication to the present generation of conductors", but that "his performances resemble[d] those of the late Arturo Toscanini more closely than those of any living conductor"—since Sargeant was a professional musician who had played in the New York Philharmonic with Toscanini a couple of seasons. One would have expected someone who had had a player's intimate experience with the plastic shaping of structure, the sensitive inflection of phrase, the rhythmic subtlety, the grace characteristic of Toscanini's performances, to recognise that nothing was less like them than the steely, hard-driven, graceless performances of Szell. (Nor was there any resemblance to these Szell performances in the work of the outstanding conductors of today—Giulini, Solti, Colin Davis, Boulez—or even any similarities in their work, that would have constituted evidence of a tradition transmitted to them by Szell.) But it turned out that Sargeant's two years with Toscanini had left him with a strange idea of his performances: writing about the plasticity of Zubin Mehta's conducting of a Metropolitan *Aïda*, Sargeant found in it evidence of Mehta's being refreshingly unlike the other younger conductors who imitated Toscanini's "adherence to rigid and speedy tempos"—which revealed Sargeant's failure to hear the lack of rigidity not only in the Toscanini broadcast of *Aïda* issued on records but in all of Toscanini's performances. And recently Sargeant has proclaimed again the nonsense that Toscanini's conducting of symphonic music was that of a man who had not learned the tradition of its performance. But before I discuss this contention I must go back to an article which appeared in *The New York Times* in 1954.

IT WAS AN ARTICLE by Henry Pleasants which began: "With the passing of Wilhelm Furtwängler . . . the German-speaking world has lost . . . its most dynamically eloquent representative of the German musical tradition." Furtwängler, according to Pleasants, had revealed inadequacies in his performances of Verdi, of French music, even of Mozart's music with its Italian and French influences; but 19th-century German music, "music of philosophic conception", he had understood as few others have, and had played "more eloquently, more movingly, more compellingly" than anyone else, accomplishing this with his "supreme sense of form." Among the examples Pleasants cited was the performance of Beethoven's Ninth, which, as it happened, I had heard several times. In April 1929, after a performance of the Ninth by Karl Muck with his Hamburg Philharmonic in Copenhagen, I got back to Vienna in time for Furtwängler's performance with the Vienna Philharmonic; and after the steadiness and control with which Muck achieved impressive power it was a shock to hear Furtwängler's constant alternation of slowed-down diminuendos to barely audible pianissimos with rushed crescendos to climaxes, which excited the audience to sheer hysteria at the end.[1] In August 1937 I heard the Ninth that Furtwängler conducted in Salzburg, which—as a result of his preoccupation with now this, now that effect of

[1] Leonard Bernstein was reported to have said to the senior orchestra of New York's High School of Music and Art, at a rehearsal: "You're hastening the crescendos. That is one of the sins of youth." It was a musical immaturity which I recall Bernstein himself exhibiting, and which endeared Furtwängler to listeners with a similar deficiency in their musical taste.

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the moment—emerged without continuity or shape. And in the 1950s I heard on records the Furtwängler performance of the Ninth that had opened the Bayreuth Festival of 1951, in which I noted, in addition to the discontinuities produced by the slowing down of diminuendos and rushing of crescendos, the ponderously slow tempos that were Furtwängler's way of achieving profundity in this "music of philosophic conception." This undisciplined, self-indulgent operation and the shapeless performances of Beethoven and Schubert it produced have come to be preferred, and Toscanini's unfailingly disciplined operation and the perfectly shaped performances it achieved have been rejected, by an increasing number of people, including a group of musicians headed by Daniel Barenboim.[2]

Winthrop Sargeant is one of those who has considered that Barenboim's performances, which in my opinion are appallingly bad, are those of "one of the world's important artists of the keyboard" and "the most promising conductor of his generation"; and in one orchestral performance Sargeant noted approvingly evidence of Barenboim's interest in reviving what he called the Furtwängler style. This, he went on to explain, included Furtwängler's "adherence to the standard 19th-century attitude toward rhythm and tempo," which "permitted ritardandos and accelerandos every few bars." A paragraph later the changes in tempo that Sargeant recalled in Mengelberg's and Furtwängler's performances of Beethoven's *Eroica* were "part of the great Central European tradition of performance"; and "the change of fashion" in performance from this freedom to rigidity, he said, was brought about in the mid-'20s by Toscanini. "His performances were masterpieces of clarity, beautiful tone, fine intonation, and dramatic form. . . . But the fact remains that he came to symphony-conducting late in life," without having "served an apprenticeship in Central Europe, where most great symphonic music came from," and therefore without knowledge of "the tradition of interpretation practised by men like Mengelberg and Furtwängler"; and making "a virtue of necessity . . . he claimed that tradition was unimportant and that he would go back to the notes as the composer wrote them"—which meant that "he gave more literal performances, held stricter tempos, and generally avoided any liberties of expression." But "the notes a composer writes down on paper convey little and leave much to the imagination of the performer or to performing tradition." And whereas Toscanini's genius, said Sargeant, enabled him to succeed in spite of his repudiation of tradition, the conductors who imitated his repudiation but lacked his genius produced an age not only of "literal, unimaginative interpretation" but of monotony: every conductor today gave the one standard performance of Beethoven's Fifth.

THOUGH SARGEANT SAID "the fact remains" about Toscanini having begun to conduct symphonic music late in life without knowledge of the tradition of its performance, the actual facts of this matter (as I pointed out earlier) were not what Sargeant (and Thomson) said they were; and the same must be said of the rest of what Sargeant stated as fact about Toscanini. Thus, the statement on p. 374 of Carse's *The Orchestra from Beethoven to Berlioz* about two great 19th-century conductors—that Berlioz "believed in maintaining an exact and steady *tempo*, without *rubato* or any of the flexibility and variability which characterised Wagner's conducting"—establishes that there was not "the standard 19th-century attitude" in this matter that Sargeant alleged, but even then the attitudes of those who believed in steady tempo and those who believed in the opposite. And the two performances of Beethoven's Ninth conducted by Muck and Furtwängler that I heard in April 1929 established that there was not the one "great Central European tradition" exemplified by Furtwängler's performance that Sargeant alleged, but again the different ways of the Central European conductors —not only Muck but Weingartner—who conducted in steady tempo, and those who did not. Moreover, just as there were unmistakable differences in the performances that Muck and Weingartner produced in their steady tempos,

[2] In a *New York Times* interview Barenboim talked about Toscanini's reputation for "playing only what was written in the score. If it said *piano*, he played *piano*. If it said *crescendo*, he played *crescendo*"; and pointed out that Furtwängler too "studied every possible edition of the score . . . to see where every *crescendo* started. . . . But that was only the beginning for Furtwängler"—implying that it was the end for Toscanini. "Unless you can see the importance of the position of that *crescendo* in the architecture of the whole movement, unless you can make the proportion right . . . no amount of study [of the score] will help," said Barenboim—the implication being that this was something Toscanini could not do.

In all this Barenboim sounded as if he knew only Toscanini's reputation, not his actual performances, in which one hears confirmation of what NBC Symphony musicians said: that "the printed score didn't tell you everything, but Toscanini believed it was what you had to start with"; so that although "the opening phrase of Mozart's G-minor was marked only *p* . . . this didn't mean one played it in an anaemically unmodified *p*: one made the modifications in the *p* that were necessary to give the phrase a singing quality" and that Toscanini's "sense for proportion . . . was really incredible." And Barenboim sounded also as if he hadn't listened as carefully to Furtwängler's performances as the London critics who had, he said, attacked them as exaggerated, wayward, exhibitionistic —which is to say, *not* rightly proportioned.

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there were differences in the performances that Nikisch, Strauss, Furtwängler and Mengelberg produced with their variability in tempo: what was controlled by taste in Nikisch's and Strauss's performances was allowed to degenerate into "mannerism and excess" and distortion (Szell's words) in Furtwängler's and Mengelberg's. It was not, then, "the great Central European tradition" that Toscanini repudiated, but the excesses and distortions like Furtwängler's and Mengelberg's (he spoke well of Nikisch, and glowingly of Schuch in reply to my question on one occasion). And the repudiation did not lead Toscanini into the rigidity alleged by Sargeant; it led him into "the subtle . . . modulations of tempo" which Richard Aldrich reported hearing in the performance of the Ninth in 1913, which Turner reported hearing in the Beethoven performances in 1939, which I can report having heard in the performances from the mid-'20s to the mid-'50s, and which can still be heard in the performances on records. Aldrich's review acquires additional significance in relation to Sargeant's contentions from the fact that he wrote in 1913 as one who had been hearing Beethoven performed in New York by Nikisch and Muck with the Boston Symphony, and therefore, when he credited Toscanini with the qualities of a great symphonic conductor, must have meant the qualities of conductors like Nikisch and Muck; and that he did not qualify this by reporting any defects in Toscanini's performance caused by ignorance of the tradition Nikisch and Muck knew, but wrote, on the contrary, that in this performance with all its subtle modulations of tempo Toscanini had kept the essential melodic line unbroken in accordance with the criterion of *melos* enunciated by Wagner (in the writing that became the ideational basis of German orchestral performance).

As for the rest of what Sargeant said, some conductors followed Toscanini in respecting the composer's text, but others did not; and the untalented among those who followed him produced boring performances, as did the untalented among those who did not follow him; but the outstandingly gifted Guido Cantelli, who was as fanatical as Toscanini in his respect for the composer's text, produced performances, including one of Beethoven's Fifth, that were not only marvellous but fascinatingly different from Toscanini's—something that went unrecognised by Sargeant, who can be impressed by the pretensions of a Barenboim but wrote once that Cantelli's "claims to distinction as a symphonic maestro have always seemed to me rather dim."

WHAT TURNER PERCEIVED as a listener—that there was "in Toscanini's conducting no trace whatever . . . of display or showmanship or self-consciousness"—was attested to by the orchestral musicians who experienced it directly in their work with Toscanini, and who spoke of having been moved, awed, inspired to exceed their capacities by a way of employing his extraordinary powers that was unique in their experience. To perform a piece of music was, for him, to produce in sound the truth that was on the printed page; to produce this truth was a moral obligation to the composer; in his work with the orchestra he was concerned with nothing but the fulfilment of that obligation; in the performance he produced one heard nothing but that fulfilment.

And so it is saddening and disheartening that those unique performances which embodied such purity of intention should have been misused and misrepresented by shoddy writing—much of it impurely motivated, some of it representing mere pretentious stupidity.

My Third Child

A third child like me, but unlike me not the
youngest,
Stella shares with my sisters the experience
of being an older sister, which I lack.
That is why, sometimes, I don't feel like her
mother:
some gesture, look or word of hers brings back
the little sister struggling in self-defence.

Karen Gershon

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An Imaginary History

Paul Johnson's Offshore Island—By MAX BELOFF

TO WRITE A ONE-VOLUME HISTORY of England has often tempted the ablest of historians. G. M. Trevelyan, Sir Keith Feiling and Sir George Clark have all produced works of this kind, remarkable in their different ways. But to write an imaginary history of England and to persuade eminent critics that this is how it really happened is a distinction of an even rarer kind, and one that Mr Paul Johnson has earned for himself.[1] What splendid material the reviews have produced for his publishers to make use of in their advertisements! Though even the publishers have not felt up to quoting Professor John Vaizey's review in the *New Statesman*, the journal that Paul Johnson formerly edited: "It would be necessary to go back to Carlyle to find a mind as original as Johnson's at work on a theme so big. . . ."[2]

No one would suggest that Paul Johnson has done nothing to justify this chorus of approval. He writes, unlike most professional historians, with commendable clarity and vigour; he has written a book that is a pleasure to read. "It reads like a novel", one is tempted to tell one's friends. Of course it does; it is a novel. It is, to be sure, not just a novel, a "rattling good yarn" to use the language of an earlier day; it is a didactic novel, a story told in order to teach a lesson. It is an Anti-European Manifesto at a time when the cause of Europe in Britain seems on the ascendant. It is history as Douglas Jay and Peter Shore and Enoch Powell and Ronald Bell would like it to have been. It is glorious stuff; but, alas, largely untrue.

It is unlikely that these remarks will much worry Mr Johnson himself; he has made it clear in the text that he does not regard fidelity to ascertainable fact as the important thing for an historian, or indeed for a journalist. The journalist and the historian, he writes, "are in the same business: to communicate an understanding of events to the readers. . . ." But it would be wrong for historians to be the "inhibited prisoners of available knowledge" for "the people have a right to be taught their history in a form they can grasp." If this cannot be done, then those labours of professional historians are "largely futile, self-indulgent, self-propagating exercises in mere antiquarianism." Not Mr Johnson's idea; in his view "a certain ruthlessness is required, a willingness to accept the responsibility of making choices and forming judgements, a readiness to select, discount and discard. . . ." The question is what one selects and where one selects it—on what grounds one discounts and discards, and how far one invents.

PAUL JOHNSON'S PURPOSE, as has been suggested, is to provide an historical background for a particular view of Britain's present predicament and to suggest that "entry into Europe" cannot be the right remedy for its problems. He does this by arguing that Britain from the earliest times was inhabited by peoples with such marked differences of outlook from those of their Continental neighbours that they formed a society qualitatively different from that of "Europe" and that the threat to this society and to their prosperity and happiness has always (or nearly always) arisen from their unnecessary meddling in things across the Channel. "Continentalism" plays the same necessary role in Paul Johnson's demonology as does "Capitalism" for Marxists or the "Zionism" of the "world-wide Jewish conspiracy" for anti-Semites. The heroes of the story are those who appear to have followed the honourable path of isolationism; the villains have been the interventionists. The difficulty is that this framework is not the one within which Britain's leaders have actually had to find an answer to their questions, and that in order to make the approach plausible it is necessary to impose upon them roles in which they did not see themselves, and are not (except by Paul Johnson) very easily seen. One could say indeed that it is only Mr Johnson's literary skill and

[1] *The Offshore Islanders*. By PAUL JOHNSON. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £4·25.
[2] *New Statesman*, 6 September 1972.

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ruthless use of the journalist's art, particularly the art of the "profile" writer, that makes the venture a seemingly credible one. In a curious way Mr Johnson writes with the same back-slapping familiarity about mediaeval kings and saints as lobby correspondents do about Edward Heath or Harold Wilson.

Johnson's history also demands a suspension of disbelief in respect of his treatment of national characteristics. The index devotes almost two columns to listing them. The difficulty is that most of them could equally be found in most other European peoples and nearly all of them among the group of peoples who are Britain's near neighbours and share the common civilisation and outlook which it is Johnson's purpose to deny. Ambivalence towards violence—belief in a divine mission—bellicosity—blind prejudice—competitiveness—conservatism—fear of change—intellectual fertility, snobbery, xenophobia . . . if one listed these as German characteristics, or as French or even Italian characteristics, would anyone want to argue the contrary? It is obvious that there are features of English life and society which are different, and are seen to be different by the visitor to these shores. But the differences within Continental Europe are just as marked and just as deeply felt.

To deal with the differences requires a deep sense of the way in which institutions have been established or modified, and a much more conscious effort at establishing what is distinctive, based as much on the historical evidence of external observers as upon personal introspection.

The lack of seriousness reveals itself at the very beginning of Johnson's book where he makes much play with the fact that Pelagius was a Briton and that his heresy flourished in Britain during the period immediately after the abandonment of Roman control.[3] These facts are reasonably well-established. But when Johnson goes on to treat Pelagius' doctrine as meaning freedom of the will in the modern secular sense, when he cites tolerance as a Pelagian virtue, when he describes Pelagianism as "the spiritual formula for nationalism, for the independence movements already breaking out from a crumbling empire", one begins to wonder. Not everyone begins to wonder, of course. Professor Vaizey can write in all seriousness of "the Pelagian doctrine that true improvement is self-improvement" as though Pelagius was a 5th-century Samuel Smiles. But historians will wonder.

[3] Mr Johnson only rarely gives reference for his views. From internal evidence, his imaginary Pelagius is derived from a rather selective reading of the article by J. N. L. Myres, "Pelagius and the End of Roman Rule in Britain." *Journal of Roman Studies* (Vol. L, 1960).

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They will at least look at the most recent and generally respected authority on the period.[4] They will discover that despite his distant birthplace, the controversial writings for which Pelagius is famous arise from and are to be explained by the situation in Imperial Rome itself. They will find that

> the most marked feature of the Pelagian movement is far from being its individualism: it is its insistence that the full code of Christian behaviour, the Christian *Lex*, should be imposed, in all its rigour, on every baptised member of the Christian church.

For the Pelagians "as for everyone else in that age of absolutism, reform meant only one thing: reform from the top; yet more laws, sanctioned by yet more horrific punishments."

Of course one could argue that at this date an error over the nature of Pelagius' doctrine is a venial sin, like referring to the Irish "liberator" Daniel O'Connell as O'Connor, or calling Thorstein Veblen a "German sociologist" (he was an American of Norwegian descent) or spelling our one assassinated Prime Minister, "Percival." But Johnson himself makes it impossible to do so because Pelagius is a key figure in his imaginary Pantheon. He finds him inspiring Wycliffe and the English Reformation:

> The Gospel according to Karl Marx, or to Mao Tse-tung, or to Keynes, all spring by direct intellectual descent from the Protestant Bible. And behind it all lies the enigmatic mocking smile of Pelagius.

It is Pelagius who allegedly inspired Gladstone since his "Christian theory of democracy was, in essence, Pelagianism taken to its ultimate conclusion." A curious fate for so aristocratic a creed, one would think. Finally, it is the hope that the "spirit of Pelagius is not yet dead" that makes it possible for Johnson to believe that Britain's "entry into Europe" may yet be reversed. How utterly remote from Pelagius' Mediterranean world or even, as in Peter Brown's account, the "rich and popular Pelagian bishops of a beleaguered Britain."[5]

JOHNSON IS ON SURER GROUND when he forsakes theology for geography. No one will deny him the satisfaction of holding that from the sixteenth century up to our own day, Britain was a maritime power in a sense not true to the extent of any of her neighbours except perhaps the Dutch. But once again there is an inherent ambiguity in his treatment of the subject. In the case of Oliver Cromwell, one of Johnson's heroes, he is praised for spurning the temptation to intervene on the Continent and for laying the foundation of Britain's overseas empire.

But when Johnson comes to the later history of the Empire, he sees imperial expansion not as an alternative to European entanglement but as its source. For in his view it was the imperial and naval conflict of British and German interests that was responsible for what he regards as the calamitous policy of supporting France against Germany in 1914. Johnson does not, one adds, belong to the old "revisionist" school which took the line that Germany was innocent of war-guilt. He fully admits that the War was willed by the Germans, but believes that Britain was wrong to resist the German bid for European hegemony since such an hegemony would have done no harm to her interests. Indeed such an hegemony would have been limited by the fact that the French would not have taken the offensive, that the Germans would have incurred great losses in doing so, and that a compromise peace would have been the probable result.

Such was not the way in which contemporaries saw the position. It does not correspond to the aims of Germany. Johnson has read Professor Fritz Fischer's work on German war-aims but seems to have taken no notice of its original title, *Griff nach der Weltmacht*. And while the outcome of the War was indeed as fateful for Britain (and indeed for all Europe) as Johnson says, this canvassing of imaginary alternatives gives no firm basis for the pillorying of the British ruling class or Sir Edward Grey, the man who has in Johnson's view "the sombre distinction of having inflicted more damage on the English people than any other man in their history. . . ."

Johnson is, of course, right to point out that the sole beneficiary of the War (at least in the short run) was the United States. As with most British radicals, Johnson finds it hard to fit the United States into his historical world. It is clear that he does not know a great deal about American history. His view that the importation of slaves into the United States stopped in 1776 makes one wonder whether he has read the Constitution itself, or is aware of one of the principal reasons for Anglo-American friction in the pre-Civil War period. Insofar as he has a view of the course of American history it is one in which the Americans came to be the heirs to much of what he most dislikes about the English —a consciousness of divine destiny. The way in which American democracy provided arguments for and against the extension of the franchise in

[4] See Peter Brown, "Pelagius and his Supporters: Aims and Environment", *Journal of Theological Studies* (n.s. XIX, 1968), reprinted in his book, *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (1972).

[5] Peter Brown, "The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy between East and West", *Journal of Theological Studies* (n.s. XIX, 1970), also reprinted in his *Religion and Society in the Age of St Augustine.*

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Britain, the appeal of America as a society in which allegedly the burdens of class privilege weighed less heavily—all this is passed by because to go into such debates would be to disavow the uniqueness of British history. Yet if there ever has been, or is now, an alternative to a European role for Britain it is in the idea of Anglo-American association, not in the notion of an impossible isolation.

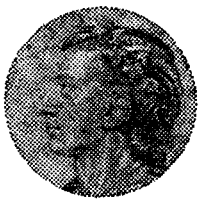
IN MAKING AN ASSERTION which is supported by little evidence that the driving force making for English resistance to external pressures in the 16th century was an ingrained racialism, a literal carry-over from the Old Testament of the idea of the English as the "Chosen People", Johnson ascribes this attitude to the way in which the English looked at their history and to

> the devotion of the English to their history, their misunderstanding of certain salient facts in it, and their breathtaking ability to rewrite it to suit their inclinations and convenience.

No doubt, then as always, what passed for history among the masses was in part myth. But when such a criticism comes from Johnson one wonders how he could allow this element of unconscious autobiography to survive in his text.

SUCH WEAKNESSES are, however, peripheral. As has been said, Mr Johnson's essential intellectual weakness lies in his belief that the history of England can be separated from that of the European continent and that its crises all reflect the national spirit resisting "Continentalism." His treatment of the Reformation thus derives from the view that Henry VIII was merely carrying on a long-standing tradition (going back to Pelagius again!) in resisting the claims of a supra-national Church. But the fact that there were many other European examples of such resistance to Rome at the time and that the English Reformation is only to be understood in terms of a larger conflict in which both sides identified themselves with, and were deeply affected by, what was going on outside England, is deliberately excised from the picture he gives. Nor will his evidence that the English were and always had been a people peculiarly indifferent to religion stand much investigation. Does he think that mediaeval Englishmen were the only Europeans whose lives hardly conformed to the moral teachings of the church in which they worshipped?

Mr Johnson makes much of the originality of the debates over the principles of government and society at the time of the English Revolution and in particular of the "Putney Debates" of "The General Council of Officers" (not, as he puts it, of "The General Council of the New Model



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Army").[6] But once again, he does not even allude to the fact that a great many countries in Europe underwent a revolutionary crisis in the middle of the 17th century and that this fact may not be without importance for understanding the English scene. In discussing the debates themselves Johnson does not bring out the degree to which the secular issues discussed cannot be divorced from religious opinions and the religious cast of mind. Nor is he impeccable on matters of fact. To call the Levellers a "social democrat group" is highly misleading (since they were individualists, and Social Democrats, one always imagines, are collectivists). Still odder is his reference to the "Clubmen" as "violent revolutionary anarchists" on "the extreme left." The "Clubmen" were in fact bands of farmers and peasants in the south-west counties who got together to resist the depredations of the Parliamentary forces; insofar as they had political opinions, they were clearly conservative in character.

Because Johnson wants Cromwell to be his hero, he has to argue that the Restoration marked a slowing down in the pace of modernisation of British society and government but for which the country might have progressed much more rapidly. But this is to ignore the fact that, on the contrary, the period of the later Stuarts was one of great technical innovation, of rapid expansion both of foreign trade and of the domestic market. As Professor J. H. Plumb has shown in his Ford lectures, this fact must be taken into account when assessing the reasons why England passed from a period of upheaval into one of great political stability under the Whig oligarchy of the early Hanoverian period; Johnson's explanation that it was bribery and nothing more that produced this result is superficial in the extreme.

IN DISCUSSING THE PERIOD of British decline from world-power status, Paul Johnson is also compelled by the nature of his approach to ignore the external realities and seek for its causes in internal developments. Since *alma matricide* is the characteristic crime of the Left-wing intellectual, Johnson (Stonyhurst and Magdalen) is bound to find room for an attack on the public schools and Oxbridge. But his attack takes two mutually contradictory forms. On the one hand, he attacks the lack of respect for science and technology which he believes to

[6] It is curious that Paul Johnson refers to the older edition of the Putney Debates by Sir Charles Firth and not to the standard text edited by Professor A. S. P. Woodhouse. Professor Woodhouse's introduction would have helped him on a number of points.

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be part of the Oxbridge ethos and supposes this to be the reason for industrial and military conservatism. He thus finds himself in the curious company of Correlli Barnett, a writer from a very different ideological standpoint.[7] The difficulty with this approach is that the obvious country with which to make unfavourable comparisons is Germany and that leads one into deep waters. Nor, it may be added, is Johnson any more successful than Mr Barnett in unravelling the complex relationships between education, invention, and entrepreneurship.

The other approach is that of the would-be egalitarian. Paul Johnson is dismayed by the failure of the 1964–1966 Labour government to introduce greater social equality, although he produces no evidence to show that equality has ever been the passion of more than a tiny minority of the "off-shore islanders." Indeed as he himself suggests it was rather a tempered and self-restrained social and political élite that enabled Britain to survive the great upheaval of the industrial revolutions with so little disturbance to domestic peace. He blames then the Labour government for not having abandoned the principles of the 1944 Education Act with its emphasis on diversity of provision as well as equality of opportunity.

> In fact [he writes] diversity and equality are mutually destructive: if diversity is promoted, equality must be sacrificed.

But he is of course shifting his ground as between two meanings of the word equality. Obviously the most equal situation is where everyone gets the same. But this does not mean that sameness gives equality of opportunity. On the contrary, the expansion of comprehensive secondary education carries with it a denial of opportunities to the bright working-class child which the grammar-school scholarship ladder had provided to counterbalance the inequalities of the home environment.

So far this is the familiar Left-socialist misconception. But Paul Johnson has a rather particular point to make. His analysis of the "failure" of the Harold Wilson government largely focuses on the role of the trade unions. But, he says, "if British trade unions are traditionally-minded, obscurantist, incompetent, anti-progressive, even reactionary—and of course they are—the fault lies with society as a whole," that is to say with the inadequate provision for mass education. It is an ingenious notion, but one which requires proof. In which countries are there trade unions that Paul Johnson admires—

[7] See Correlli Barnett, *The Collapse of British Power* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1971).

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presumably they must be European countries since one can hardly see him enthusing over George Meany's AFL/CIO—and how does their provision for mass education or for the education of trade-union leaders compare with Britain's?

As so often in Johnson's book one comes up against the weakness of the underlying structure. The kind of society that Mr Johnson admires is, as he admits, closer to achievement in Britain than elsewhere. There is more humanity; more social sense; more responsibility on the part of the élites—otherwise why worry about a partial abandonment of self-determination? But such a society depends upon continuous adaptability, and egalitarian systems have no potentiality to adapt to new situations. Nor is such flexibility possible without the dialogue with the exterior which has been the true theme of British history. No man is an island, says the poet. And no people are just "offshore islanders."

The Combination in the Safe

On Peter De Vries—By WILLIAM WALSH

THE PUBLICATION of a new book by Peter De Vries, Calvinist clown and metaphysical comedian, gives an opportunity, gladly grasped by me, to take a more deliberate look at some distinctive work which certainly offers rare entertainment but which is also in its wit and cogency much more than straightforwardly entertaining. *Into Your Tent I'll Creep*,[1] perhaps a stretched *novella* rather than a novel, signals no new direction in De Vries's mature manner whether in idiom, method or target, although in spirit it belongs to the earlier, sunnier part of his career. The laughs to a page outnumber the laughs to a book by another—any other—humorous writer. The history of Albert Ernest Banghart, a Chicagoan, "aware of the origins that there was nothing to do but rise above," includes the expected succession of family and sexual calamities; of efforts at personal reformation which have, as De Vries might say, more the air of backsliding from a hopeless moral seediness than of ascending to a higher plane; it includes a wife with diction so precise you can hear the semi-colons as she speaks, and an agnostic minister of a Church where divorce has been made a sacrament, who catches religion of the Jesus Saves variety and is at once unfrocked by his shocked, gaberdined congregation; and there is one episode, the pure milk of De Vries gaiety, when Al, fearful that he has caught the pox and suspecting that regular doctors have to report social diseases to the authorities, fails to persuade a vet to give him a definitive decision but manages to blackmail him into giving a diagnosis in the park, where the ethics of the animal surgery don't apply—thereby landing himself with an indecent exposure charge. The execution is finished, the writing tight and professional, the comedy smoothly evolved and the product of an individual point of view. But it is not just for these admirable things that we value De Vries, and I want to consider some more significant features of a talent which seems increasingly original and impressive.

Here is a passage from *Comfort Me with Apples* (1956). It is from the novel's quiet beginning, is routine and characteristic and corresponds to what in other writers would be cement, glue or continuo.

> My sharpest early memory is of a summer-night storm during which we were sought out by lightning. Our family of four (I have a younger sister) were all in the parlour at the time, and saw something nibble the golden fringe of a scatter rug, run over my mother's shoe-buckle, lap at wall-plugs (not looking for an outlet, just foraging for metal) rummage in an open sewing kit and browse along a shelf of books, leaving the gilt in some of the titles illegible. I remember thinking in its career across the living room it seemed to resemble some whimsical and very wicked marmalade.

The urbane air, the lightly bantering tone, the enticing intimacy of direct address in speech appropriate to one of a series of narrators, the hint of self-ridicule, the silken run of the narrative, the importance of a provincial home, of family, of memory, the domestic details of early *l'entre deux guerres*, the sense of an exquisite equilibrium precariously balanced and preparing for a pratfall, the metaphorical vivacity—everything helps to manifest the quality of a singularly individual sensibility. And I haven't even mentioned what

[1] *Into Your Tent I'll Creep*. By PETER DE VRIES. Gollancz, £2.

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he is most commonly known for, an extraordinary range of comic linguistic devices, an amalgam of Euphues, Hood, Sidney Smith, Oscar Wilde, Mark Twain, the English parodists and the American practitioners of the wise-crack: except that the wise-crack in De Vries is not the sharply-tapped, puncturing nail we're used to in American comic writing. It connects with an attitude, is continuous and organic, and more like a mode of speech or a dialect dedicated to a barely sustained and desperate frivolity. In the De Vries attitude we see an intellectual process which is like something moving and turning back, like an Hegelian dialectic running backward through a projector. Synthesis unravels into antithesis, antithesis turns into thesis, and thesis is reduced to a deflated footnote.

The delirium of the opposite is a condition many of De Vries's characters escape or collapse into. Spofford, the rancidly authentic New Englander in *Reuben, Reuben* (1964) becomes "that most displaced of all displaced persons, your native son in a modern town." Tom Waltz in *Let Me Count the Ways* (1965) is converted by getting deathly sick at Lourdes. But if God's hand was laid on him in that off-beat way it was nothing to what it did to his father, a missionary atheist of the intense type, who was so terrified by thunder and lightning apparently heralding the end of the world that he baptised himself under the tap in the kitchen sink.

> "Christ coming alone?" Tom asked when we were on our feet again.
> "We don't know yet. It's too early to tell. The best thing to do is sit tight and see what happens. All we know is, we acknowledge him lord and master."
> "And how!"
> "I'm not making any excuses," I said through chattering teeth, "but he did tell his disciples he would come back in their time. I merely raise the point. That and a lot of other discrepancies—*from a human point of view*—naturally made us figure the Bible was untrue, but it turns out that they are all part of the divine mystery, which I now accept lock, stock and barrel."

Chick Swallow, in *Comfort Me With Apples,* the flaneur, the boulevardier, cultivator of style, standards, suavity and epigrams, becomes the Lamplighter, the cracker-barrel philosopher on the local paper and the fabricator of peppigrams which are epigrams "of an inspirational nature on the theme of success and designed to spur and uplift." In *The Vale of Laughter* (1953) Joe Sandwich and his wife Naughty are both transformed. Joe carries his craze for laughs into bed, and indeed all over his wife, marking her on the appropriate quarter with a variety of stolen rubber stamps, "fragile", "this side up", "important", "prime."

1665-6

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> As a result of these upheavals Naughty and I arrived at another of those accommodations that are a special product of human chaos, another exchange of those compromises and concessions without which no union can survive. I agreed to renounce the view that life is a farce, hardly congenial to one born to perpetuate it, in return for which Naughty tried to correct her own deficiencies as a mate. She ate oysters for her virility, undertook a series of exercises designed to correct inhibition . . . and pored over a succession of marital guidebooks, often far into the night. "Come to bed, Naughty," I would plead from upstairs, but she was obsessed with sex, just what happened in physical conjunction, how it worked, and so on, sometimes not retiring until she met Uncle Hamilton blinking his way up from the Late Late Show.

In these slivers of De Vries timber—imported Dutch Elm—are implicit several of the themes which most engage his interest, marriage as war, sex as absurdity, the liberal suburb of the psychiatric city and its obsessively reductive technique of thought, religion, its loss and surrogates, and all those delicious quavers of Catholic Original Sin and Calvinist Total Depravity. Hostility in marriage may be elegant as in that early romp, *The Tunnel of Love* (1955), where it has to do with achieving a position of moral one-upness on the partner, and is related to the antagonism of competitors in a game with formal rules, a devious and malicious chess. "Now she was close. In a moment she would wound me if I worked it right. Then I'd be in the catbird seat. Carefully, I cued her; carefully because this called for egging, a hair's-breadth too much could in a twinkling reverse the advantage by making the other one the injured party." Or as in *Mrs Wallop* (1971), it may bloom into the grotesque dominance of Mrs Wallop over Mr Wallop which their son Osgood remembers like this:

> Then let's see. My Father. What she did to him was nobody's business, so let me tell you about that. "Wipe your feet when you come in—and the dog's too!" I mean when he came back from taking his dachshund for a walk, especially if it was wet, how he'd get down on all fours and, taking one of the dog's paws at a time, wipe it on the doormat. . . . Is it any wonder my father would turn the doormat around so that he read the word "Welcome" on it *as he left* the house?

Between Connecticut subtlety and straightforward slavery there are many gradations of feeling in the marriage bed of nettles, from the cool relationship of the Reverend Mackerel to his late and supposedly saintly wife in *The Mackerel Plaza* (1958) all the way to the simple honesty of detestation between the piano remover, Stan Waltz, and his revivalist wife, expressed alike in blows and religious warfare, in *Let Me Count the Ways:*

> "It's my duty to do everything I can to save your immortal soul."
>
> "I haven't got any. Neither do you. How many times do I have to tell you? All right, where did Cain get his wife?"
>
> "We're not going through all that again."
>
> "The hell we aren't." I grabbed her by the wrist and swung her around from the icebox where she was. I had been drinking, as what husband wouldn't who wakes up and finds he's married to the bride of Christ. I pinned her arm behind her back and repeated, "Where did Cain get his wife? I won't let you go till you answer. Who must he of married, if we take the rational approach?"
>
> "He married his sister," she said at last, and I let go, to let her rub her arm.
>
> "All right. So incest. The whole human race is the product of incest, some crown of creation, if your hodgepodge of ancient documents is true and the Blue Book I gave you to read on evolution is not." I sat down at the kitchen table with a bottle of beer. I brooded, wishing again she was a Catholic, a highly sophisticated sect where even the priests are educated enough not to know a damn thing about the Old Testament.
>
> "I wish you wouldn't eat in your undershirt," she said. "It's so common. Nobody does that."
>
> This sent me into a rage. "Then in that case it's not common, it's rare!" I said, rising, and, as luck would have it, belted her one.

And the truth about marriage, as De Vries sees it, is that while some marry their father and others marry their mother, everybody marries his enemy. The cage inside the zoo inside the jungle always contains animals of a different emotional species. "Hence the hostility between the sexes, both of whom are stir-crazy," says Johnny in *Through the Fields of Clover* (1960).

Peter De Vries has the humorist's faculty of seeing the weird in the familiar extravagantly developed.

> I am a prey to fantasies. I imagine that there are people on this planet named Max Planck. I imagine that all matter is reducible to units of energy whirling in submicroscopic orbit, of which balls of roaring gas form the delirious counterpart in outer space. I must curb these delusions or see a doctor. . . . I sometimes fancy that I am supported on a jointed improvisation of Tinker Toy called "bones", and then must pause and pass a hand across my brow till the conviction subsides. Where will it all end? *(Let Me Count the Ways)*

Nothing provokes this faculty for the ludicrous so much as sex, particularly as seen in the extramural shopping around of middle-class husbands. (There are one or two romantically sensuous scenes figuring the young, *e.g.* in *Through the Fields of Clover,* which hardly come off.) These husbands, whether musing pontifically on some office decision or chatting brightly at a party, are much given to what their puritan ancestors would call impure thoughts, which De Vries gives in the form of plaintive academic questions addressed

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to an indifferent universe. "That girl with the Boss was lovely. If hitching down her shoulder straps I sought her breasts as in the love of globed fruit, would I be accused of an unhealthy mysticism?" "She went out with her gelatinous walk, her flesh setting up within mine a useless contrapuntal greed, leaving in my mind a familiar mixture of tenderness and filth. If without preamble I raised her skirts and likened her limbs to marble seen by moonlight, would I be accused of Neo-classicism?" (*The Tents of Wickedness*, 1949). These husbands find it extremely difficult to sin, even with every circumstance cooperating, including both partners. They are constantly let down by nervous impotence or smothered by eiderdowns of guilt or hampered by hysterical giggles and the habit of self-consciously watching themselves perform. One is indelibly marked by his mistress's sunlamp, another suffers a sudden hernia as he staggers with a neighbour's large wife in his arms towards the bedroom. Even when these harassed husbands get further along the road, the act is still riddled with rot, impropriety disrupted by the inappropriate. In full cry one character has to pause to take a telephone message about the figures of Consolidated Potash, its performance in the market superior to his own outside it; another one discovers a casual husband with a camera at the end of the bed; another is preoccupied by the shadow of a second woman—Mom—or finds that not even love-making can interrupt his erotic fantasies.

> Often I would *think* of possessing Mary while in the act of doing so, chimerically flavouring my lust with mental images of our essaying other and more unusual anthropoid positions than those in which we happened to be conventionally thrashing.
> *(Mrs Wallop)*

The most bowel-melting treatment of sex as a hoot comes in *The Vale of Laughter* in which randy Joe Sandwich and his quieter-blooded wife, in the interests of a Kinsey-type investigation for Sanity Inc., go to bed wired to a small portable console, with instruments for recording changes in skin, blood and respiration strapped to arms and legs, and with one hand thickly coated with Kaolin paste grasping another electrode.

> Abandoning oneself to erotic pleasure is sometimes difficult without encumbrances. . . . To be ravished in a thicket of tubing, to the accompaniment of throbbing machinery, quivering needles and digital bleeps offers hazards enough to a person of normal sensitivity. . . . I felt like some computer-age Dionysus, enacting a rite propelling us onward into a future in which the machines would do the actual screwing for us, and consciousness be refined into some kind of abstract numerical bliss, through which we would float eternally as through a heaven of pure equation. Pi in the sky, don't you know. Meanwhile we must make do with the gross organs and exuded dews we wish to supersede.

A Family Business

is the title of Francis Ianni's highly acclaimed study of the Mafia: John Mack writes in *New Society*: 'a formidable achievement, Ianni has produced an immensely effective piece of participant observation strongly based on theory and yielding a wonderful all-round picture of a real kinship group'. Essential reading for a well-balanced view of the Mafia's involvement in and attitude to crime.

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Hugh MacDiarmid is Scotland's greatest living poet. This anthology, issued in honour of his eightieth birthday, is the most representative selection of his work so far published. Iain Crichton-Smith commented in the *Glasgow Herald*: 'I cannot remember when I was so impressed by a book of poems'. Donald Davie's **Collected Poems** has been long awaited. The book as a whole is a record of twenty years of published writing by one of the finest English poets writing today. Donald Davie's last book, *Essex Poems* was described by Alan Brownjohn in the *New Statesman* as 'a distinguished collection, beautifully produced . . . of astonishing beauty and resonance'.

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Sex is only the most prominent line of the educated current truck which offers so many, and such irresistible, invitations to De Vries. He takes in everything, from houses—"the house was one of those of which the architect's dream seems to be that of making the finished product resemble as closely as possible the blueprints for it"—to high fidelity radio—"the ideal of high fidelity enthusiasts, to give the listener the illusion of *being inside the sound*"; from Marshal McLuhan —"television 'tactile'! it's not even *visual*"—to modern ballet—"that species of callisthenics executed in tight jeans and bare feet and addressing itself to contemporary problems such as soil erosion or the installation of high-tension wires . . ."; from cinema chat—"I thought the chase scene static"—or wine chat—"It was a 1937 Rüdesheimer Hinterhaus Riesling Auslese Wachstum und Original Abfüllung Grafen von Francken-Sierstorpff"—to the mania for collecting, though no collection of pictures or furniture could equal the effect of Joe Sandwich's collection of *names*. Reading it to his wife convulsed her into premature labour; "Jasper and Suzanna Quonkle, Pearl Handel, Nan Tuckett, Nina Knight, O. U. Mann, Mr and Mrs von Luciano, Carlos DiPloma, Lily Lipsake, Orville Banguish, Kunigunde Zweititz . . ." he crooned to her as she was rushed into the labour ward, "Mrs Yerball, Mr and Mrs Bunsnatcher, Lester Poorcock, W. W. Tummy, Fracas W. Sostenuto, Mother Abelwhack, Lord and Lady Pishcredit. . . ."

But this is above all Mental Health country as it is called in *Reuben, Reuben,* one of the novels, incidentally, in which there are certain distortions of design, a deficiency in shaping the whole being De Vries's main technical weakness. In this land the drama has to do with role-playing, the crises are those of identity. The young are brought up in a system in which a whole new intellectual category is born of educational research to describe those not performing up to snuff, the class of *underachievers* in which Mrs Wallop's son Osgood is enrolled. The people have their myths and liturgy and their ritual lingo for describing them. "Social elements thus in opposition enact dramatico-metaphoric embodiment of tribal drives which were at the same time religious in nature." Everyone is intensely concerned with relatedness though not with his relations. In Mental Health land vigorous or prolonged refutation or denial of a charge cloaks the inner recognition of its truth. The gamy Mopworth, therefore, in *Reuben, Reuben,* resigns himself to being taken by the modish to be courageously struggling with a natural homosexuality. "He was in a war you could not win, in the hands of a régime that shot all its prisoners after a fair trial." This is where girls ask young men who quote verse, "Why must you always break into poetry at serious moments? Are you afraid of feeling?" and where the language of the natives which seems at first to the foreigner to be a mode of self-criticism is nothing of the kind. "In America such self-inventories were not admissions of faults at all but claims to complexity. Basic insecurities and feelings of insufficiency and the like were all degrees of intricacy on which the natives preened themselves." The deprived are those, like the narrator in *The Tunnel of Love,* a magazine editor who asks to be given credit for the fact that "the drive to get out a magazine every week could be basically sexual in nature, a kind of sublimation for the person in question," or those taken to be deficient in intricate neurotic organisation like Chick Swallow in *Comfort Me With Apples.* "I think I can say my childhood was as unhappy as the next braggart's. I was read to sleep with the classics and spanked with obscure quarterlies." In this society chastity is regarded as a perverse over-emphasis on sex, and many a wife's troubles start like Elsie's in *Through the Fields of Clover* when she is forced to commit an unnatural act on her wedding night, sexual intercourse.

THESE ARE NO MORE than a fistful of the indices or symptoms of well-bred, civilised living offered on every page. If they have anything in common it is a touch of blandly Benthamite, abstract lunacy, of the kind discerned by Mrs Wallop in the war of generations.

> Still the nuthouse metaphor is valuable as such. A further application of it might liken revolutions, whether political or social, to uprisings by patients who have trussed and gagged their erstwhile keepers after herding them successfully into the head administrator's office. The ruckus today is generational. It remains to be seen which of the two generations is more crackers.

The curious thing about these derisive exercises is that while they dissolve reality into absurdity in a vat of wit, verbal invention and frothing farce, the end effect is neither negative nor cruel; in fact the comedy has a sad note and the mockery goes, strangely enough, with pity. Even the savage cartoon of the Philistine carries with it a touch of pleasure in his very grotesqueness and of pity for the nature he shares with the author himself:

> He was thick-figured, thick-fingered, thick-necked, thick. He wore a hand-painted necktie depicting a scene of the kind more normally seen on bass drums. It was a woodland prospect featuring a waterfall, which spilled the length of the cravat, knotted so that it would. He had *taste*. He nodded at something the girl was saying, his head down and his chin, or rather chins, resting in

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> a pleated assortment on the knot of the tie, just above the source of the cataract, affording one the fancy of its all running out of the side of his mouth.
> *(The Tents of Wickedness)*

The same dry, wry, tolerant scorn informs his attitude to advanced liberal intellectuals like Cornelia Bly's brothers in *The Tunnel of Love*. Carveth, the clerical one, quarrelled more with the churchmen he was left of than with the scientists he was to the right of. A subtler version of this sophisticated clerical line is the Reverend Mackerel of People's Liberal Church, in the beautifully balanced novel *The Mackerel Plaza*, who had the first split-level church in America, with five rooms and two baths downstairs, a small worship area at one end, and a psychiatric clinic attached. Mackerel's pastoral duties involved calling on a woman bent on visiting hospitals to organise hymn-sings among the patients, in order to discourage her. The People's Church was designed to meet the needs of the day, grafting the Freudian ideal of maturity on to the Christian one of selflessness in a manner free of outmoded theological definitions and palatable to a mind come of age in the era of relativity. "It is the final proof of God's omnipotence that he does not exist in order to save us." "This aphorism seemed to his hearers so much better than anything Voltaire had said on the subject that he was given an immediate rise in pay and invited out to more dinners than he could possibly eat."

There is more feeling and less malice in the way the progress from religion to psychiatry is displayed in the side-swipes "at plain, lowdown, cornball, meat-and-potatoes, Jesus Saves" fundamentalism in another splendidly finished novel, *Let Me Count the Ways*. Affectionate disgust rather than distaste describes the author's feelings here. In fact these two, religious fundamentalism and cultivated liberalism, are the poles between which the world of De Vries's novels move. Of course, the liberalism he embodies is much subtler and intellectually stronger than the one he mocks in the fiction, just as the fundamentalism he was born to, primitive, Dutch, Calvinist, is decidedly tougher and more heavily weighted theologically than its American version, as we see in the nakedly immediate and rawly autobiographical *The Blood of the Lamb* (1961). The Dutch brand, with its casuistry, its nice distinctions and its cult of total depravity, is immensely more impressive than the Jesus Saves sort of religion his characters complain is giving the Church a black eye. Just the same, the altercation in De Vries's soul is the same as the friction between these two forces. That is why his writing, which has the surface elegance of Santayana, is never too creamy or too

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pat—one senses something turbulent, violent, agitating underneath—and it is why this funniest writer since Oscar Wilde (though one with an immensely superior intellectual equipment) is so serious. One hears something tearing as the satin sentences elaborate, the cry of one who wants to judge society from the standpoint of good and evil when these categories have been reduced to mental health and psychosomatic disorder. De Vries's anguish is to find the drama of sin fallen away to the chart of a syndrome. The appeal of De Vries is that of one whose most thin-lipped smile is orchestrated with a belly-laugh and whose loudest guffaw has in it qualities of pain and delicacy. One sees in De Vries emotional attachment to religious attitudes intellectually discarded. The dogma has gone; the sympathy, the taste, the point of view remain. In the same way, De Vries articulates a highly civilised liberal mind which is only too conscious of its present hollowness. His career has been from Jesus to Janus, like that of his most convincing figure, Tom Waltz in *Let Me Count the Ways,* who switches within hours from piety to blasphemy, according as he is revolting against his father, the militant atheist, or his mother, the aggressive Christian. "There are two sides to any question of importance, and the only thing for an honest man to do is to take both of them." This is by no means an untenable attitude when you think like Tom's father Stan, another guarded pessimist. "If you want my final opinion on the mystery of life, I can give it to you in a nut shell. The universe is like a safe to which there is a combination. But the combination is locked up in the safe."

Love, Madness, & other Anxieties

By Roger Scruton

PASMORE, the hero of David Storey's first novel in nine years,[1] is the victim of nameless anxieties that alienate him from all he has previously valued. He leaves his wife and children, and goes to live in a small flat, which at first he embellishes with a mistress in the vain hope that this will provide the motive for an action that is as incomprehensible to himself as it is to those who suffer from it. When the mistress leaves, Pasmore is helpless and empty, possessed by cruel fantasies of the life he has betrayed and preyed on by the desire to consummate his own unhappiness. He tells his family of what has happened, and so adds his father's hatred to the list of self-inflicted sufferings. Finally Pasmore begins to crave the understanding and affection that he has sacrificed. He takes to lingering wraith-like cutside his former home. And then, by an unexpected reversal, he returns at last, repentant and absolved.

It is a weakness of much of Mr Storey's writing, even at its most successful (as in the recent plays), that the motives of his characters tend to remain obscure. What we are supposed to take as the unreality of Pasmore's experience is in fact no more than the unreality of Mr Storey's description of it. It is not that we are not told why Pasmore leaves his wife and children: it is rather that what we are told is strangely opaque, as though Mr Storey did not regard it as part of the narrative:

> How meaningful was his existence if he could not transpose himself into the world of individuals whose experience, patently, all around him, was lacking in those self-validating certainties which made up all he knew of himself as an individual?
>
> He was reluctant—driven to the other extreme—to measure out his world in deficiencies: deficiencies prejudicial, that is, to his moral well-being. . . .

This jumble of abstract thoughts, from which little can be extracted that throws any light on the hero's motivation, soon gives way to a more concrete evocation of Pasmore's state of mind. But in becoming concrete the prose becomes trivial: we are at once in danger of losing sight of anything distinctive in Pasmore's experience:

> Yet plainly something was wrong. On certain mornings he would waken beside her to be immediately aware of a tension, like waking to a room on fire, to flames and smoke. The whole place was alive with the vibrancy of the figure beside him. His body ached. If he had given in and touched her he was sure he would have cried out, in rage, in grief, in some peculiar and wholly unimaginable torment. He couldn't understand it. He was oppressed.

This sort of writing, with its short sentences and futile imagery, conveys a sense of precision that

[1] *Pasmore.* By DAVID STOREY. Longman, £2.

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is in fact illusory. The prose remains entirely static. "Flames and smoke", for example, says no more than "fire": it does not explain the metaphor. If the room is "alive", then this is only a shift in the figure of speech that itself requires an explanation—alive with what? To add "with a vibrancy" is merely to repeat the idea. All we know is that the tension proceeds in some way from the figure at Pasmore's side. But if that is so why does Pasmore's body ache? Clearly he does not want to touch his wife; but why? Because if he does so he will cry out with rage. Or rather, not rage, but grief. That is to say, not grief, but a "peculiar and wholly unimaginable torment." The only sentence in this paragraph that is well-written is the next: "He couldn't understand it." For how can Pasmore understand what his creator himself is unable to express?

IN SUSAN HILL'S *The Bird of Night*[2] we find a portrayal of madness which, while less dramatic than Mr Storey's, is far more convincing. The novel concerns a poet—Francis Croft—whose madness and suicide are described by his close friend and companion, Harvey Lawson. Lawson is a studious man, of few passions, who has pursued his researches into Egyptology unhindered by private affection. However, when he is introduced to Francis Croft, Lawson is able to respond to the other's need for a companion, and they begin to live together. Through Francis' suffering and the almost unbearable demands that this makes on Harvey Lawson, the latter is afforded a fulfilment which, in his self-centred solitude, he would never have envisaged. The narrative recounts, through Lawson's eyes, and with frequent glimpses at Francis' letters and diary, the state of the poet's mind as it hovers between childlike elation and despair. The result is a touching picture of this possessed but innocent mentality, written with a strong sense of detail and a fine instinct for illogicalities.

The book has faults, certainly. For one thing it is repetitive. Moreover, the character of the narrator—Harvey Lawson—is ill-defined. It is not clear how he views at the end his relationship

[2] *The Bird of Night*. By SUSAN HILL. Hamish Hamilton, £1·95.

THE FALL OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Adam B. Ulam

"A telling indictment of those American scholars who capitulated to university terror—notably, those who pretended to enjoy the experience. But it goes further, in showing the internal conditions which had weakened the authority of learning and scholarship before the terror commenced. A usefully disturbing book..." **Professor Paul Seabury**
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with Francis Croft. Miss Hill tries to paint him as a testy old man, exhausted by the demands he has had to meet, and impatient of the trivia that now, in Croft's absence, surround him. But her way of describing this attitude is false and declamatory, and the final effect unconvincing. On the other hand one cannot but respect Miss Hill for daring to describe a friendship for which there is no hint of a sexual motive. It is through this brave challenge to modern orthodoxy that the story becomes poignant: the normality of the love between Croft and Lawson lends a serious and disturbing quality to the former's illness which it might otherwise have failed to acquire.

THE THEME of the values of friendship is a familiar part of E. M. Forster's repertoire, and one would not have been surprised to find it developed in *The Life to Come*,[3] a collection of stories most of which have not before been published. This volume contains all the stories that Forster judged either too weak or too "indecent" to be published in his lifetime, and, in the opinion of the present reviewer, it is a great pity that Forster's judgment in these matters was not allowed to prevail. It goes without saying that the stories are far from bad: they are written with imagination and skill, and with the author's characteristic gift for dramatic irony. Their main fault lies in a callow vision of human relationships, which exists here in the absence of the qualities—strong delineation of character and brilliant description—that make the novels so often successful. In his published stories, indeed, Forster frequently allowed his whimsical romanticism to dominate: he presented neither scenes nor characters, but only idylls. But while the previous collections—*The Celestial Omnibus* and *The Eternal Moment*—are charming and inconsequential, at least half of the present stories are distinctly unpleasant, with a grotesque mixture of heavy-handed melodrama and adolescent sensuality that renders them at times almost unreadable. It comes as a surprise to find Forster writing so openly about the physical aspect of homosexual passion, although one can scarcely claim to be shocked by a treatment that is, by present standards, so mildly phrased. But set against the background of unreal and futile relationships that Forster creates in these stories, the homosexual scenes have an "indecent" and unpleasant quality beyond anything in *Le Journal du Voleur*, or in *Notre Dame des Fleurs*. Suddenly, in the middle of a laboured evocation of middle-class sociability, we find an ageing businessman hurrying into the bushes with a milkman whom he has greeted on his morning round. Not only is the milkman young, handsome, genial, good-natured and consumed with generous passion for a middle-aged stranger in a dressing-gown—he is also self-sacrificing to the point of attempting to refuse a gift of money and, later, denying to the police all knowledge of his lover's identity. This characterisation of rustic motives is only absurd because of the attempted realism; as an erotic idyll the scene would be at least acceptable, if slight. A powerful tension exists between the unreality of motive and an insistent earthiness of description, and this lends a tone of wish-fulfilment to the story.

This sentimentalising of physical passion is certainly the most obnoxious feature of the present stories. It leads to no genuine exploitation of sexuality for dramatic ends; on the contrary the sexual encounter becomes a meaningless and vapid endpoint (identified in one story with death itself) in which the very attempt at individual existence comes to rest. One might point here to the contrast with Genet—and it is to be expected that a writer of Forster's sophistication would have accepted the possibility of a Genetesque treatment of homosexual feeling. For Genet,

[3] *The Life to Come*. By E. M. FORSTER. Edited by OLIVER STALLYBRASS. Edward Arnold, £2·50.

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the sexual encounter serves not as the conclusion of a romantic episode, but rather as a premise from which to begin the exploration of unusual feelings and inverted states of mind. By being explicit Genet merely sets the tone for his particular kind of realism: the motives of his characters, seen through a sophisticated introspection that is not their own, are tested against the banality of the sexual encounter and so given distinction. It is part of Genet's excellence that he avoids all sense that it is in homosexuality that his characters find their *raison d'être*. It merely provides the soil in which more complex passions can achieve fruition. In this way the suggestion of "indecency" is after all avoided. Set beside Genet's achievement, one can see at once that Forster's stories fail for just the reason that persuaded him they should not be published.

SEXUAL RELATIONS are also the main preoccupation of Strindberg's stories, published under the title *Getting Married*, and now translated in their entirety by Mary Sandbach.[4] The turgid moralism of this work is lightened by so many touches of genius that one can readily forgive the translator for not making the substantial excisions one would like to have made oneself. Strindberg wrote with neither elegance nor wit and with absolutely no thought for literature as an art. On the other hand he had a power of observation and a sense of detail, and it is these two qualities that enable him, in the best of these stories, to present his vision of marriage in a manner that is both realistic and affecting.

> He persuaded her to write a book about "Juvenile Criminals". It was severely criticized. She was furious, and swore that she would never write anything again. He took the liberty of asking her if she wrote to be praised, if she was ambitious? She replied by asking why he wrote? This led to a bit of an argument, but it was only refreshing to hear views other than his own, once in a while. His own? What did he mean by that? Hadn't she views of her own too? After this her pride always required her to demonstrate that she had her own views, and, in order to prevent any misunderstanding, these must not be the same as her husband's. But when this happened he told her she might think what she pleased as long as she loved him. Loved? What was he talking about? He was an animal like all men. . . .

It is remarkable that such realism should flourish in the sterile wastes of Strindberg's pedantry. Not content with a long preface about the state of marriage, Strindberg goes on to repeat himself endlessly in the words of his protagonists, and in heavy-handed commentary whenever a favourite point is proved. It goes without saying that this is an artistic failing; it is the more annoying, however, in that the views which Strindberg is prepared to force on the reader are manifestly absurd. He is under the delusion that the true purpose of marriage is to further "natural selection" and thus breed a more perfect race of human beings. This fatuous piece of popular science accompanies an obsession with feminism, which Strindberg is unable to treat with proper objectivity. Feminism and the bourgeois marriage are seen as complementary forces, conspiring to undermine the relations between men and women and so to produce a race of debilitated and unmanly wretches in whom the light of progress will be finally extinct. It is only by a narrow margin that Strindberg's complex powers of observation win against the crass simplifications of his thought.

IT IS PAINFUL nonetheless to turn from these expressions of enthusiastic bigotry to a modern work which, while equally moralistic, has none of

[4] *Getting Married*. By AUGUST STRINDBERG. Gollancz, £3.

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Strindberg's honesty of purpose. John Berger's *G.* is a novel of remarkable ambitiousness, in which a complicated plot, a great amount of contemporary history, and some of the theories of Marx and Gramsci are all made to coalesce in the melting-pot of a morbid subjectivity.[5] The resulting mixture is both unpleasant and indigestible. "G." is the illegitimate son of a Leghorn merchant and his Anglo-American mistress. He is brought up in England, away from his parents, and, after being seduced at an early age by his aunt, embarks on a life of sexual adventure. His particular combination of aimlessness, ruthlessness and excruciating sentimentality adequately equip him for the role of Don Juan: all he lacks (although this is everything) is a sense of humour. G.'s first meeting with his father, in Milan, at the age of eleven, occurs during the period of martial law imposed in 1898: G. watches the construction of the barricades and the shooting of the rioters. We are supposed to believe that this encounter with political reality somehow infects G.'s destiny, and from now on every episode in his life is paralleled and —if we could but see it—explained by some corresponding public or political event. This profoundly metaphysical assumption gives Mr Berger the opportunity to turn his attention to massive crowd scenes, and so distract the reader from the problem of G.—the question who this man is, and why we should be following him through these aimless and derivative episodes, is entirely avoided. Indeed it is clear from the start that it is not G. who is the main hero of the book but rather Mr Berger himself; the novel is essentially about Mr Berger's inability to write about G. It is characteristic of Mr Berger's arrogance that as soon as a scene is properly under way he will pause to moralise about the impossibility of saying what he is about to say. In this way he constantly diverts the reader's attention to himself, but without having anything of substance to communicate other than the fact that he, Berger, is incontestably the intellectual superior of his reader.

> Any attempt at an exhaustive description of what she was experiencing is bound to be absurd. . . . To express her experience it would be necessary for us to reconstruct around ourselves her unique language. And this is impossible. Armed with the entire language of literature we are still denied access to her experience. There is only one possible way of, briefly, entering that experience: to make love to her. Then why do I want to describe her experience exhaustively, definitively, when I fully recognize the impossibility of doing so?

In this way Mr Berger is constantly falling back on the banal idea that words do not begin to capture the deep truths he is attempting to convey. At times he has recourse to graffiti: "Through these drawings," he writes, "what I have called the quality of firstness in sexual experience is perhaps a little easier to recall." The humourless way in which he explores his own professed inability to say what is troubling him would be comic were it not for the implication that what he is attempting to say is in fact inexpressible. Clearly Mr Berger's eminent predecessors—George Eliot, Gustave Flaubert and Thomas Mann, to name but three—were entirely mistaken in thinking that their gifts were adequate to the task of describing human feeling. From his position of superior knowledge Mr Berger is able to see that no experience can be grasped except in its entire historical context, and that the writer can at best trace a few outlines that may or may not suggest what he will undoubtedly fail to define. It is in this way, no doubt, that Mr Berger would justify the tedious complexities of plot and the digressions into seemingly irrelevant events. It is not true to say that the writing is always bad. Humourless and pretentious it certainly is. But when he forgets himself, Mr Berger is capable of a certain descriptive eloquence: if he were able to forget himself further, then he might even discover some human character to describe.

[5] *G.* By JOHN BERGER. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £2·50.

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YUKIO MISHIMA'S *Spring Snow*[6]—the first of the tetralogy "The Sea of Fertility"—is everything that Mr Berger's novel is not, that is to say, lucid, poignant and dramatic. It also has the kind of originality that only a writer who has renounced the desire for mere originality can achieve. Perhaps the most remarkable quality in all Mishima's major works is the calm objectivity with which he is able to describe experience that is far from commonplace and yet capture its "uniqueness." It is through the exploration of the peripheries of human experience that Mishima presents his vision of what is normal. Kiyoaki Matsugae, the young hero of *Spring Snow,* is distressed at his susceptibility to a beautiful girl. But in ruthlessly demanding submission, and thus destroying both himself and her, he reflects through his self-consciousness the normal and—in many ways—humane imperatives of traditional Japan. We see the values of the Imperial society reflected in his act of sacrilege, and it is as though the details of Kiyoaki's experience only become vivid for us through the light which they borrow from this source.

Mishima's work is remarkable not only for its objectivity, but also for its reflective quality; he is able to surround his characters with a web of complex thought that is poetic without being rhetorical. Even in the simplest of dramas, the motives are never banal. The action of *Spring Snow* takes place shortly after the Russo-Japanese war. Kiyoaki, the eighteen-year-old son of the Marquis Matsugae, has been educated in the household of Count Ayakura, in order to acquire the culture, veneer and status that the Matsugaes—a recently ennobled Samurai family—as yet lack. Count Ayakura's daughter Satoko loves Kiyoaki, and as a result refuses all offers of marriage. But because she is his senior by a few years, Kiyoaki is unable to accept her love at face-value. He is proud, with a self-centred decadence acquired through imitation of customs alien to his full-blooded race. As a result he is unable to perceive the directness and simplicity of Satoko's passion: he takes her attempts to reveal it as expressions of superiority, as cruel exploitations of the vulnerability which their common childhood has created in his feelings. He hardens himself against her, and when the news is announced of her engagement to a Prince of the Imperial household, he is strangely satisfied at his own indifference. And yet, such is the child-like egoism of his nature, the picture of his own indifference weighs strongly in Satoko's favour: he imagines that he risks nothing of himself in embarking on what is in fact a dangerous liaison. The risks, such as they are, remain external: circumstantial excitements to a passion that leaves his deeper self unharmed.

> He wanted her this way and no other. And she herself, on the other hand, had always wanted to keep him off balance by playing games. How things had changed now! She could have chosen this beautiful, sacred, inviolable position at any time, but she had always preferred the false role of elder sister, cherishing him with that affectionate condescension he so hated. . . .
>
> The elegance he had absorbed from his infancy under Count Ayakura's tutelage now became a silken cord in his hands, a noose for his innocence and for Satoko's sanctity. Now at last he had found a valid use for the shining rope whose purpose had puzzled him for so long.

Satoko yields to him and their tragedy begins. The climax of the book is handled with simplicity and skill, and it is extraordinary that Mishima includes so much beside the suffering of his main protagonists. The novel unwinds like a finely painted scroll, to reveal scenes and portraits with a distinctive poignancy of their own. And strangely, as the action becomes more violent, the prose becomes more calm and static; the characters are suddenly viewed at a distance, seeming to fulfil a necessity beyond their author's control. In this way the novel begins to take in more and more of Kiyoaki's surroundings, until the picture of his experience is finally complete.

Though simple and poetic, the style is capable of bearing a considerable stress of thought. Often the descriptive and explanatory passages are elaborated to a degree of complexity rarely encountered in Western literature outside the works of Proust or Balzac. It is remarkable that, for all the elaboration, Mishima never repeats himself, and never gives the sense of departing from the central plot. His ruminative style is a natural consequence of the attempt to treat human motivation in its full complexity. In this book, even more than in *Forbidden Colours,* Mishima is almost entirely successful.

[6] *Spring Snow.* By YUKIO MISHIMA. Translated by Michael Gallagher. Secker & Warburg, £2·75.

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AUTHORS & CRITICS

Anderson's "Unemployment"

Patrick Hutber

MR ANDERSON has crammed his shot-gun full of ammunition and fired it off in the general direction of unemployment. As a result he has peppered his target, and while this makes for lively reading it does not make for particularly easy discussion.

With some of the things he says it is possible to agree. Quoting the phrase "There is no labour-saving device half as useful as a housemaid" he draws attention to the astonishing shortage of labour in the old-fashioned service trades—nurses, domestic help, handymen, etc. He rightly points out that many of these are terribly underpaid, and that this is an economic nonsense. In my part of the world it is impossible to get anyone at all to help in the garden, unless you can cozen an old-age pensioner into coming round, largely I suspect for the pleasure of conversation, a cup of tea, and the feel of a fork in his hand again. And yet 30p-an-hour is what people would expect to pay a jobbing gardener. Greatly daring I offer 40p, thus threatening to corner the market, and yet it should surely be more than this. Is there scope for an agency to do for jobbing gardeners what Norland does for nannies—raise the status and the pay? More generally, one reason why an Incomes Policy is essential is that left to themselves the forces of the market will never succeed in procuring an adequate wage for some of the most vital members of the community—the social workers, probation officers *et al.* who are unlikely ever to be strongly unionised in the way that teachers are.

Mr Anderson's main thesis however can, if I understand him aright, be summed up in the words "Unemployment has increased, is increasing, and ought to be increased." He believes that we are inevitably faced with a monstrous amount of unemployment, present or prospective, and the answer to this is change our social attitudes (and, of course, financial arrangements), treating freedom from work as a blessing, and encouraging early retirement, etc.

To my mind, there are three major flaws in this argument. The first I have to indicate by asserting that two years from now we are much more likely to be facing a shortage of labour, and all the problems that brings to the economy, than massive structural unemployment. Of course, the total is much too high at present; but to see why it is, we must analyse the nature of this unemployment in more detail. Apart from short-term unemployment—people who are genuinely going to get a job within a few weeks—and that hard core, perhaps 150,000 strong, of the mentally disturbed, inadequate personalities, non-English speaking immigrants or the frankly work-shy, who make up the unemployables, there are three main sorts of unemployment at the present time.

There is regional unemployment associated with inconvenient areas and declining industries. There is what one might call "redeployment" unemployment (if Mr Harold Wilson will forgive the term) arising from a change of attitude in British industry, an end to a lot of overmanning and feather-bedding, and a once-for-all move to more efficient levels of manning. And there is recessionary unemployment caused by the failure of the British economy to grow over the past five years at any acceptable rate.

Unemployment, though high, is already patchy—there is a shortage of labour in Central London; and in my area of North Bucks the unemployment rate is nil. After two years of 5% growth, to which the Government is totally committed and on which it is staking everything, the only serious unemployment will be regional. Elsewhere, and above all in the south-east, *labour shortage* will be the problem.

Ah, Mr Anderson will reply, but the whole trend of machines is to displace men. Quite so. But technological advance displaces them into the service industries—a growth in leisure trades (such as garages, restaurants, yacht marinas) and a growth in government services. One shipyard may close down, throwing 30,000 men out of work; but one new airport, such as Foulness, will need 150,000 or more. Already in the United States a far higher percentage of the labour force is in services than is the case here in Britain, and the trend will continue in both countries. It is a highly welcome trend, since as Mr Anderson rightly points out services improve the quality of life. Moreover, economy in manufacturing manpower can mean an end to noisy, dirty, repetitive and degrading jobs in factories; already Volvo in Sweden is beginning to reorganise its car production in terms of groups of people rather than of a continuous production line.

PATRICK HUTBER *is City Editor of the "Sunday Telegraph."* J. R. L. ANDERSON'S *article was published in the November* ENCOUNTER.

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FINALLY, THERE IS this question of early retirement. Even if there were not a prospective shortage of labour, this would be a disaster economically and socially.

Economically, because with a work force already biased towards the older groups, retiring men fifteen years early and women ten years early would probably eliminate one-third of the labour force.

Socially, because the urgent need is to devise ways of enabling people to stay at work *longer*. Nothing is crueller, nothing kills them off more surely, than the premature retirement of fit men. And although there is a bear market in wisdom at the present time, I happen to believe that in steadiness, in experience and in maturity the older section of the community has something special to contribute. A more hopeful trend is surely towards the ending of boring work—except for those (and there are many) who do not want work demanding resource and initiative and are soothed and reassured by repetition—combined with shorter hours, longer holidays, and a maximum four-day week. In the leisure-oriented world into which we are moving people will want to maintain high incomes throughout their lives to enjoy their leisure to the full.

James Griffiths

ON FIRST READING, Mr J. R. L. Anderson's article infuriated me.

I am an old Welsh coal-miner and I saw red when I realised that Mr Anderson would close every coal mine in Wales. To me Wales without coal-miners is unthinkable. And to contemplate my native village, with its rich community life, turned into a soulless suburb made me see red. My working life spans the years 1904 to 1970, and the idea of retirement at 50 would have meant for me sixteen years of Muggeridge's "Wasted Years." Most of all I should have missed the experience of serving as Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, and of becoming the first Secretary of State for Wales. I nearly consigned Anderson's article to the fire (coal fire); but I calmed down, read it again and again, and then recalled a conversation I had a few months ago.

I had a visit from a young trade-union officer from America. As a young man on the threshold of his career he asked me, an old man, what I thought would be the major problems trade unions would have to face in the rest of this century. I had thought a good deal on these problems since my retirement, and ventured to reply to him as follows.

Technological Change and its major consequence: loss of jobs through the introduction and improvement of new machines.

I cited an example of one of our major industries within which the two dominant firms had been merged, and placed under the management of one of our City wizards. The result was that in three years production had increased, productivity increased by 20%, profits soared; but 35,000 workers were put on the road. I told him that it would be futile to look to economic growth for a solution. We had reached the stage when technological redundancy would outstrip any rate of economic growth possible. We had to return to basic principles. When I began my trade union career, my old chief said to me: "Remember, my boy, five minutes off the working day is more beneficial, and lasts longer, than 5% on the pay. . . ."

So, perhaps Mr Anderson is right after all; we must plan for a shorter working life (18 to 50 years), a shorter working week (4 days of 35 hours). And to meet a further consequence of technological change—the destruction of old skills—provision for a year's training at three-year intervals.

All this was easy to spell out. Not so the second major problem of modern industry—BOREDOM. The only *job* I learnt properly was that of a coal-hewer. This was in the days when coal-hewing was a craft in which I had to acquire a dozen skills. In a modern coal-mine I would be consigned to one operation every day five days a week and for as many years as I could stand it. And the only relief would be a holiday, or a strike. I would like to see Mr Anderson make a study of the relationship between strikes and boredom. My young American friend told me that some of his colleagues were seeking *one possible* answer by a kind of worker's "Sabbatical Year"—one free year, at full pay, for each five years of work.

So, we may find that there is a point in Mr Anderson's article. I find it difficult to think of unemployment and idleness as anything but a curse. I was brought up in a Victorian Nonconformist home. At school we were told by our masters that "The boy who is late at school will become the man who is late at work." At Sunday School our pastor taught us to sing *"Work for the night is coming."*

I spent half my life in Wales condemning the curse of mass unemployment and seeking new industries and work. As a Socialist I hated the Idle Rich, who waxed fat on the back of the Workers.

JAMES GRIFFITHS, *a life-long socialist, was Labour M.P. for Llanelly and served in Harold Wilson's Government as Secretary of State for Wales.*

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Perhaps Mr Anderson is right that technological change makes unemployment a necessity and that we must learn to make a virtue of necessity. It may be that his heresies of 1972 may become the orthodoxies of *"1984"*—and that 1984 will become Anderson's, not Orwell's, year.

John Vaizey

THE CHANGES which are taking place in the modern economy have many sources, but they chiefly arise from the application of modern technology to productive processes. For a variety of reasons, what we call "consumption", or what we call "income", are attempts to measure what in a very profound sense are not measurable entities. If we say, for example, that there has been a rise in the standard of living, the criteria upon which we could say that there has been such a rise are exceedingly hard to define. This is common knowledge among the better-trained economists; but it is hastily passed over in the early weeks of most economics courses and is, therefore, forgotten and repressed by the great majority of those who study the subject. All we can say, in fact, with any certainty is that the future is different from the past. But within that very broad boundary it is certainly true to say that there is now the potentiality of greater abundance of output of physical goods and services, at least in the post-industrial world, than ever before; and there is no real sign, in my view, that this superabundance is likely to decline.

In particular, one of the changes that has occurred is something that I think should be widely welcomed, namely the decline in the necessity for routine hard toil in factories and mines and on the land. And at the same time there has been a shift, substantial enough to be called dramatic, in the direction of occupations which require contacts between human beings and which fall broadly in the sphere of activity known as the "service trades". There are, for example, now *more* people working in hotels in England than there are working down the mines—and there are more people working as teachers than working in agriculture.

JOHN VAIZEY *is Professor of Economics at Brunel University in London. He is the author of two recent studies of "Capitalism" and "Social Democracy" (Weidenfeld and Nicolson) and a four-volume treatise on "The Economics of Educational Costing"; he has also had several novels published.*

Whether or not this is a change that is to be welcomed (as I think it is), it is a change which has occurred and is likely to continue to intensify. One of the consequences of this is, I think, that something in economics which has been a perennial puzzle is likely to become something far more significant in the future. That is to say, what is the difference between work and pleasure?

For myself, there are certain aspects of the jobs that I do which I find intensely boring. These include sitting on committees, and some aspects of routine teaching. But some of the jobs which I find intensely boring are jobs that I get paid for, whereas the most excruciating boredom is that which I endure voluntarily (particularly when serving on public bodies) where there is not only no remuneration but there is actual monetary cost in serving. The reasons why one undergoes this suffering are a mixture of vanity, a desire to expiate past crimes, a desire to help other people, and so on. But the point is that there is throughout modern society, as a hangover from the days of industrial capitalism, the theory that you work and therefore incur what might be called disutilities in order to earn money with which you buy what you might call utilities. This is, in fact, almost diametrically opposite the picture of my own life. What I call "work" and what I get paid for is discoursing at large about economics and politics to a group of articulate and interesting students, is writing and researching and reading books. And what is normally called "pleasure", such as going to a theatre, is for me a matter of such excruciating physical and intellectual discomfort that I sometimes feel that I ought to be paid very substantial sums by the Arts Council for going to these understandably heavily-subsidised productions.

In other words, I think that Mr J. R. L. Anderson has made a very important point but has made it in the wrong way. We are, in fact, approaching the stage where most of the ordinary things of life (such as food, house-room, travel) can be achieved by a relatively small amount of physical and intellectual labour which is required of us by some social conventions, which make most adult males perform the role of wage-earners and salary-earners, and a substantial and growing proportion of adult females as well; while, at the same time, a great deal of what we do is quite arbitrarily classified either as work, or as leisure, or as public service. What this profound question raises is, of course, something that I am trying to tackle in a new book, but which I find extremely difficult to get hold of. It is, namely, this: If there is, in fact, no great need now for anybody to do very much of anything just in order to keep the society going (that is to

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say, we have moved away from a situation where we would all starve if the great majority of our fellow-countrymen did not work ten hours a day 50 weeks of the year in their mills, factories, and coal-mines), then on what basis do we distribute the kinds of goods and services which are now available? *On what basis do we say who should do what and who should earn how much?* I have never been able to understand why it was thought that neo-classical economics (of the kind which our Prime Minister used to think he believed in) provided any kind of answer to these questions. Piero Sraffa nearly 50 years ago demolished its intellectual basis—as indeed his predecessor, Alfred Marshall, had started doing 40 years before that.

So it leaves us with a major intellectual and emotional problem. Briefly put, it is: On what basis do we lead our lives, *i.e.* on what basis do we call some aspects of our lives "work" and other aspects "pleasure"? This is, I think, a serious, important question, and Mr Anderson deserves praise for raising it.

Samuel Brittan

LIKE A GOOD MANY ARTICLES on economic topics which maintain a distance from professional thought, Mr J. R. L. Anderson's article contained a mixture of welcome insight and unhelpful confusion. The discussion it is intended to provoke will be most fruitful if other writers are equally frank about both aspects.

Mr Anderson is right to query the belief of the British economic establishment that by careful adjustment of budgetary and monetary policies Governments can achieve a fine control over the level of unemployment and business activity. Both the Treasury and its would-be watchdog, the Select Committee of Expenditure, take it for granted that Whitehall can decide whether the economy is to be "run" at a 1½, 2½, 3½ or 4½% rate of statistically measured unemployment. This is an example of the subservience—pointed out by Keynes—of the would-be orthodox to academic scribblers of a generation back; in this case to a narrowly arithmetical version of his own doctrine.

Observation suggests that no such fine control is attainable. What appear to the Treasury (or National Institute) man as specific policy, or forecasting, errors are more likely to reflect a radical misunderstanding of what policy can hope to achieve. If the official target is, say, 2% unemployment as recorded in the official statistics, and this happens to be out of line with underlying forces, one can safely predict a whole series of accidents or misfortunes, such as obstinate Ministers, technical errors, or international events, that will appear to have "blown the economy off course." These *ad hoc* explanations conveniently disguise the impossibility of what is being attempted.

Whether he knows it or not, Mr Anderson is reflecting a strong strand in current economic theory which maintains that the ultimate effects of "expansionist" policies are on the price level or the exchange rate rather than on "real" things such as output and employment. This strand of academic thinking finds virtually no reflection in economic practice in this country. Of course, misguided financial policy can make unemployment unnecessarily high—for example, by sticking to an overvalued currency, or by erratic changes in the movement of the money supply. But it cannot choose any "unemployment target" at will and make it come true. In all these matters the Keynes of the 1920s seems to me to have much more to tell us than "Keynesian" theory as developed in the 1940s and 50s out of the master's Depression writings.

Mr Anderson is also abundantly justified in bringing out the role of the trade unions in contributing to the unemployment problem. It becomes extremely difficult for workers who have become redundant to find employment in other industries if trade unions there resist, as Mr Anderson puts it, the "influx of newcomers" in order to preserve wage relativities. To the extent that trade unions can push the Government into "preserving jobs" in industries such as coal-mining, shipbuilding or aircraft, the result is not full employment but make-work. Such policies cause all of us—including, in the long run, the workers concerned—to be worse off than we need be. There are many other ways in which trade union monopoly power affects employment adversely; and it is time that economists abandoned the muted tone which so many of them reserve for this topic.

UNFORTUNATELY, Mr Anderson commits a near howler when he urges a National Minimum Wage nearly up to the present average of current industrial *earnings*." By definition, some wages must be below the average and others above it, unless all wages are equal. If one is going to make radical proposals about minima

SAMUEL BRITTAN *is economic commentator of the "Financial Times." Among his books are: "Steering the Economy" (rev. edition 1971), "The Price of Economic Freedom" (1970) and "Left or Right: The Bogus Dilemma" (1968).*

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and averages, one should at least have a rough idea of what these terms mean. Mr Anderson's aim is, it seems, to revive demand for services such as domestic services or home handymen (objectives with which I passionately agree). But if he uses the law to push up wages in such trades he will be defeating his own object. For by making such services more expensive he will restrict demand for them still further, and will push the cult of do-it-yourself to ever-more-fanatical extremes.

Mr Anderson's article suffers from a further misunderstanding of the implications of "under-consumptionist" theories. *If* unemployment is really due to too little consumption, the remedy is to put more money into the hands of anyone who will spend it. Redistribution of income to the poor or gifts to developing countries are only two such means. Purchasing power can be increased, according to the logic of "under-consumptionist" theories, by cutting taxes and/or increasing the amount of money available to the banks. Overseas aid or domestic redistribution needs to be argued on its own merits, and not on spurious employment-creating grounds.

THE FUNDAMENTAL WRONG-TURNING is taken when the article raises the bogey of satiety, satiation, or saturation of wants—whichever of the ungainly terms one wishes to use. The nightmare—which really ought to be a paradise—of a society in which all wants can be satisfied by very little labour, has been raised after every major invention and during every recession for at least two centuries. But, unfortunately, it has so far failed to materialise. One would know that this state of Nirvana or doom had arrived if the authorities were to cease all tax collection and sent people regular and dependable packets of notes in the post, but found that however large these packets were people could be relied upon not to increase their spending. We are not there yet.

The basic confusion is between the kind of unemployment that people positively desire because they find it more congenial to live on what they can obtain without working, and the kind that exists when people would much prefer to work at the going rate of wages for their skill, but are unable to find jobs. Whether such "involuntary unemployment" reflects trade union monopoly power, mistaken financial policies, or shifts in the demand for different types of skill, does not make it any less uncomfortable for the individuals affected. The exact definition of "involuntary unemployment" is a complex matter which urgently needs more thought by economists (whose profession, however much one dislikes it, is to think about these matters). But we are lost if we do not maintain a dividing line between a preference for not working and an inability to find a job.

When Mr Anderson brings up the hoary old chestnut of non-military (but compulsory) National Service for the young my sympathy vanishes completely. It is entirely inconsistent with the main thread of his own argument. For if wants are saturated, the last thing that we need is compulsory two years' work from able-bodied workers. This would make the supposed problem of excess production even worse. But one suspects that the National Service proposal reflects mainly the desire to discipline the young in an unpleasant way which—far more than anything in the economic field—is the real English disease; and that it has been dragged into some reflections on unemployment because the author believes in it in any case.

BUT I SHOULD LIKE TO END on a more conciliatory note. One can easily sympathise with those who hope for some diminution in the appetite for more and more material objects and one would like to think that with the growth of affluence further additions to wealth and income will become decreasingly attractive. Even then inventions and bright ideas for doing things better will still be valuable, but people would enjoy the fruits of increased productivity in the form of more leisure, or more congenial and relaxed working conditions with less of a rat-race atmosphere. Increased living standards can take these forms and need not involve higher take-home pay. Indeed I have myself attempted in a forthcoming book a sketch of how a competitive market economy could adapt itself to the spread of an "alternative" and less acquisitive life-style.[1]

We shall know that tastes have changed in this way from the behaviour of people in the labour market, the kind of jobs they seek, the relative success of different types of employers in obtaining workers, the pattern of bargaining over wages and conditions and similar evidence. The unemployment figures will not provide us with the required diagnosis. Otherwise the three million unemployed of the inter-War period would have had to be diagnosed as a widespread preference for leisure on the part of poor and hungry people living in the slums.

But, above all else, the choice between leisure, take-home pay and other aspects of the living standard should be made as far as possible by individuals and not by some pundit at the centre. Which, of course, brings us back to the case for a civilised and properly managed market economy and away from National Service and all that.

[1] *Capitalism and the Permissive Society*, to be published shortly by Macmillan.

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LETTERS

From a Russian Historian

I HAVE HAD the pleasure of reading Professor Bernard Lewis' article *The Study of Islam* [ENCOUNTER, January] . Your journal, where this article has been published, is not too easy of access here. Professor Lewis' remarks concerning Soviet scholarship are quite to the point. Perhaps, I may be permitted to make only one reservation. Recent controversies on the "Asiatic Mode of Production" are not to be regarded only as a kind of "intra-Marxist disputation." This discussion was a result of the fact that some (mostly younger) historians and philosophers realised that it was impossible to describe and explain the history of real human societies by sticking to the predominant dogmatic scheme of the historical process. They tried to oppose something to it. But, being untrained (or poorly trained) in modern social science and the philosophy of history and, at the same time, not desiring (or fearing) to go beyond the limit of the orthodox Marxism, they tried to find a theoretical basis in some of Marx's statements which had been rejected in the 1930s. Of course, nothing could come out of it but scholastic disputes. Nevertheless, these disputes in themselves have shown a crisis of Marxist historical theory and the impossibility of getting out of the crisis without going outside the limits of this theory. The guardians of orthodoxy smelled a rat very soon. If their scheme of the historical process is not universal, then the socialist revolution, as well as many other things, is not inevitable. Thus, the "Asiatic Mode of Production" is unacceptable to them not only as prophecy (as Bernard Lewis put it), but also as history.

All these controversies, to be sure, have very little to do with scholarship in general and with oriental studies in particular. But they have stimulated some studies in economic and social history which may have a usefulness quite beyond dogmatic purposes.

PROFESSOR A—— R——

Leningrad

"Ghetto"

IN HIS CONFRONTATION with Mr James Baldwin, reported in your September issue, Mr Peregrine Worsthorne accused him of lack of respect for words in his use of "ghetto", maintaining that it could be properly applied only to areas set aside for Jews in Central European cities.

Had he said Italian cities he would have been on firmer ground. However, *Webster's Dictionary*, the *American Heritage Dictionary*, *le Dictionnaire du Français Contemporain* and Hoare's *Italian Dictionary* all give a second definition of the word, applying it to other racial minorities in other countries; and Professor J. H. Plumb, of Cambridge, writes in the Summer number of *Horizon*: "Look at the desolate center of Detroit, with its parking lots and ghettos cut by expressways. . . ."

C. A. ASHLEY

Trinity College
Toronto, Ontario

GHETTOS were places where Jews were confined by law, and had to return to by a certain hour. They are associated in the public mind with *pogroms*—organised massacres. My view is that the application of such an emotion-charged word to a place like Harlem is tendentious, intended to suggest that Negroes in America are as cruelly treated as Jews used to be in, say, Russia or Poland.*

Mr James Baldwin would probably describe any police action against black gangs as a pogrom, and it may well be that this propaganda bait will soon also be swallowed by gullible white historians. But it is precisely because these bad habits are so catching, even among those who should be immune, that they are so undesirable, and need to be put down.

PEREGRINE WORSTHORNE

London

Homosexual Marriage

I WISH to support Angus Wilson and R. N. Noyes in their argument with E. J. Mishan who insists that the reasoned case in favour of legitimising homosexuality has yet to be made. I thought it had been made quite frequently, but I presume that he wants to see it spread over 10,000 words or so in ENCOUNTER, defended by an entanglement of footnotes.

It seems that he is prepared to tolerate the existence of homosexuals (as a kind of unfortunate accident) but he is not prepared to tolerate the legal and institutional legitimation of their activities. Why not? He pleaded the principle of conservatism whereby the onus is upon the reformer to produce compelling grounds for change and *(Letters, September)* he tried to bolster up his case by appealing to the situation in the sciences. This is misleading. If we want our scientific knowledge to grow we have to be critical of existing theories. We have to be aware of the open problems, of situations which demand improved

Ed. Note.—The issue has come up before in these pages, and the following lines were written by the American poet Karl Shapiro [ENCOUNTER, October 1970]:

There are no ghettos in America;
There are plenty of slums and heartbroken cities
But no ghettos. Ghettos had law and honour
And cleanliness. Ghettos lived by the Book
And when the soldiers came, died by the Book.
Let's get the language straight;
Let's be done with this defilement of language;
Let's be done with criminal "humanists"
And poets who hire out for hate.

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theories, and these are likely to make their first appearance as wild and speculative hypotheses.

The principle of criticism can be used just as readily in the field of morality as it can in science, and we should be prepared to scrutinise our existing norms to see if they meet our highest standards of justice and humanity embedded as they are in norms of a more general nature. When we do this we should be prepared to repeal or reformulate laws that are harmful or redundant, and we should be prepared to draft new ones.

If one general principle of law is to prevent people from hurting each other then we will need rules of the road, and there will be laws prohibiting such things as murder, rape, mugging and arson. It is quite clear why everybody should drive on the correct side of the road, but it is not obvious why everybody should organise their sexual or marital partnerships in the same way. Who will be hurt by the legitimation of homosexual relationships? What objective moral principles will be violated?

E. J. Mishan's reference to evolution (*Letters, June*) is not convincing because we are no longer uncritical components of the mechanism that nature selected for human survival. If propagation of the species is a moral imperative then I eagerly anticipate reading Dr Mishan's reasoned case against contraception. Homosexuality is statistically abnormal; but so is reading ENCOUNTER. It would seem that these appeals to "evolution" are simply an attempt to smuggle the naturalistic fallacy in through the back door to support a certain kind of current prejudice.

RALPH CHAMPION

London

I AM NO MORE an enthusiast for homosexual marriage than Mr Mishan. But in answering Angus Wilson [ENCOUNTER, September] he really shouldn't be quite so melodramatic. He raises the spectre of "the homosexual act" consecrated "with holy waters" and solemnised by "the Church." This may cause a shudder. But it is a speculation that conveniently ignores the fact that most marriages nowadays are effected in registry offices.

BRIAN SOUTHAM

London

The Poor Who Were With Us

PROFESSOR W. H. HUTT presents the case for the "optimist" school of political economists [ENCOUNTER, November] with disarming candour. What now distinguishes them from benighted Pessimists, he makes very clear, is differences of opinion not so much on the facts of the Industrial Revolution, as on how they should be interpreted.

L'Affaire Ezra Pound: What is Due to a Man

IN The Times *Professor Martin Kilson raised some questions regarding the action of the Council of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in denying Ezra Pound the Emerson-Thoreau award.* Contrary to Mr Kilson's statement, the officials of the Academy did not intervene to reverse the decision of the committee. Harvey Brooks, as president, did not express an opinion; neither did John Voss, the executive director. The only Academy officer who spoke out against Pound was myself (I am one of four vice-presidents), and I spoke as an individual.*

Prior to the meeting of the council, a preliminary canvass indicated that a majority might approve the award. Twenty-five men, the council, debated for three hours, in agonized awareness of the complexity of the issue; nowhere was there arrogance or presumptuousness. In the end, a number changed their mind (and how often is that the case in debate?), and the vote went against Pound.

THE SECOND GENERAL POINT *which Mr Kilson confuses is the issue of "intellectual freedom." This is nonsense. None of us would ever censor the man's work, and we would defend every effort to publish it. At issue is the question of homage: what is due to a man, and for what? The corollary questions are the relation of esthetic works to moral norms and the distinction between a man's work and the conduct of the man himself. These are complex issues which are not settled in a letter; I can only try to summarize my own views.*

Mr Kilson says that a political-moral criterion was used. This is not so. A moral criterion, yes; a political one, no. Politics represents transient interests or ideologies and should not be a source of judgment. Morality states certain enduring principles derived from the experience of the race.

THE ISSUE HERE IS: *if art does not bend to moral norms, what are the consequences of the claims for the autonomy of the esthetic work? The search for esthetic experience, justified in its own terms, leads, as we have known from the earliest descriptions in the Old Testament, to the avid exploration of murder, sadism and torture, both in the imagination and in practice, on the ground that all sensations, all experience, should be open to esthetic inquiry. Art, as we know, draws from the taproots of the demonic, which gives it so much of its power. For this reason, art, more than any other mode, may illuminate the crooked heart of human experience. It allows one to understand human beings better; it does not, necessarily, make them better human beings.*

The Goncourts, reflecting the esthetic autonomy of the nineteenth-century French writers, proclaimed that art is not moral; perhaps, but people are, or are not. We have to distinguish between those who explore hate and those who approve hate. In short,

* *This occurred shortly before Ezra Pound's death in Venice on 1 November, 1972, at the age of 87.*

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He does not dispute, for example, that tens of thousands of children had to work thirteen hours a day (often more), six days a week. He merely argues that this cannot *really* be regarded as "systematically cruel." If it isn't, my name is Edmund Compton.

In his article Professor Hutt refutes none of the points I made in mine [ENCOUNTER, September 1971], or in my book. He contents himself with reiterating the Optimist version—which, of course, he is entitled to cling to. But he does raise one issue which needs clarifying. Factory children in the early part of the century, he claims, were worked so hard in order that they might not need to work.

> The truth is that, to the extent to which the institutions of early industrial capitalism permitted "free competition", they were, for the first time in the history of mankind, *eliminating* the necessity for children to "earn their own bread", and the need for burdensome toil generally. The machine age under competitive capitalism did not *create* juvenile or adult drudgery—it *eradicated* it.

If this were true, the Optimists would have better grounds for their justification of the course the Industrial Revolution took. But there was no need for child labour. On the contrary, the whole history of capitalism has revealed that to have based industry on child labour was a disastrous mistake, not simply for the systematic cruelty involved, but because wages were too low to provide the purchasing power for the manufacturers to sell their goods.

As I said in my article, it was not capitalism which was responsible for the ugliness of the era, but a particular brand of capitalism, derived from Ricardo (though he was himself moving away from it at the time of his death), and long since mercifully extinct.

Or so I thought.

BRIAN INGLIS

London

BRIAN INGLIS still relies on the "polemical tricks" of which I had to charge him. *Of course* child labour was in itself cruel, if we judge it in the light of the rising humanitarian standards of the 19th century (the emergence of which, as Ashton stressed, was probably the greatest achievement of industrial capitalism). But this does not mean that those responsible—the parents—were cruel. Nor is it relevant to Inglis' allegation of "systematic cruelty" to children *in the factories*, which is what I challenged.

And I did *not* claim that "children were worked so hard in order that they might not need to work." Nor did I claim that real wage-rates (although they *were* rising and higher than anywhere else in Europe) would not have to be judged as deplorably low if they were compared with the higher levels which the régime was creating for later decades. It was the multiplying flow of wage-goods which enabled the purchase of childhood (and adult) leisure.

The institution of child labour was, as I showed, an inheritance from the pre-capitalistic, pre-*laissez-faire*, mercantilist era. To blame capitalism for an unlovely institution which it alone could eliminate without almost unbearable injustice and suffering is to stand history on its head.

Mr Inglis claims that I have refuted none of the points he made. Well, your readers are the jury. I suggest that I have answered him directly in respect of every one of his main points. Had greater space been appropriate, I might have been able to do so more adequately.

W. H. HUTT

University of Dallas, Texas

and for What?

one may appreciate the painful work of a man who has, at great personal cost, spent a season in hell; but it does not follow that one honors a man who advocates a way of life that makes the world hellish. Necessarily, one has to draw a distinction between the work and the man.

ALL OF THIS IS SUMMED UP *in one experience: in our own lifetime—and that of our children and theirs—one cannot escape the meaning of the Holocaust. It is not the abstract question of "anti-Semitism" but the extraordinary fact that six million Jews perished in the death camps. Is this politics or the inescapable confrontation with the power of murder to rule the human heart? And what does one say of those who have allied themselves with these murderers? It is not a question of Pound alone. In Germany, Gottfried Benn was as great a poet in his language as Pound was in English, but an ardent Nazi. In France, Louis-Ferdinand Céline was probably the greatest French novelist of the mid-century, but an active collaborationist. In Italy, Gabriele D' Annunzio was a master of Italian poetry, yet a Fascist. One may be compelled by the power of their work; one may, as in the case of Pound, who has taken a penance of silence, long after, forgive; but does one honor them?*

Daniel Bell

in the NEW YORK TIMES

Forster's Horses

MR T. R. FYVEL in his review of Dr June Perry Levine's book on E. M. Forster's *Passage to India* [ENCOUNTER, September] attributes to Forster an acuteness of political insight and a degree of prescience which seems unwarranted. Obviously, British officials overreacted in time of trouble. The memory of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 was still latent; and the Amritsar riots and the Jalliandwalla Bagh massacre testify to the brittle nature of the British hold on India, not to speak of the various terrorist movements and the Khilafat agitation. When Ronnie Heaslop in *Passage to India* insists that the British troubles in India were probably "the Jews", he is not, as Mr Fyvel suggests, expressing his own or E. M. Forster's foreboding of Hitler but simply mouthing a sentiment which was common among the readers of "Sapper"

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or of John Buchan's novels. As for the rather laboured symbolism of the last meeting between Fielding and Aziz, this can hardly be taken as more than a recognition that India and England were at the parting of their ways, unless one credits the horses they were riding, "who did not want it" (*i.e.*, their masters' friendship), with the wisdom of the Houyhnhnms.

M. BRYN DAVIES

University of Saskatchewan,
Regina, Canada

MR BRYN DAVIES is being too heavily matter-of-fact. I can only repeat that if re-read today, Forster's works suggest a prescient awareness of what I called "something already in the air", namely those profound changes in Western culture in which old middle-class liberal beliefs would be no longer enough. Today, when India has been self-governing for a generation (yet with intellectual anti-British outbursts still going on) and when we also have a sizeable Indian-Pakistani community in this country, the evidence still is that personal friendship totally untroubled by racial and cultural differences (such as Fielding, Forster's English liberal, wanted to achieve with Dr Aziz) remains agonisingly difficult. This elusiveness was surely what Forster sought to convey in what Mr Bryn Davies calls the "laboured symbolism" of Fielding's last ride with Aziz. Not only the diverging horses separated Fielding and Aziz. In Forster's

An Arrabal Première in Berlin

Berlin

FERNANDO ARRABAL'S *poetic credo would seem to be: the gilding of excrement. But excrement it must be. He has no feeling for love, and only in hate can he gather strength. Feelings of respect are absurd for him, for he respects only the horrific. His poetic moods are spun out of a personal mix of naiveté, sensitivity, and negation, and apparently he has in his recent period heard from his political friends that the whole world is now in a state of hateful desolation. His latest play, "The Thousand Year War", is a confrontation with this state of affairs in the pathological form of a Theatre of Horror.*

All is excrement, and everything is in nauseating decline. Human politics is in a stinking state, diversions are ridiculous and intolerable, Olympia silly and idiotic. As for the Church, it is bigoted and murderous, and all the artists of the century are impotent little swine: a poet can be honoured with a Nobel Prize but only after receiving the certificate and the laurel in a W.C.-scene, closeted with the Man of Power.

ACCORDING TO ARRABAL, *and he says it and demonstrates it on the stage, drama is unworthy, stupid and superfluous. (One could almost be tempted to agree.) War is evil. Colonialism, as he has been informed, is also something to be rejected. And so he proceeds to reject it by letting us have a cannibalistic scene in which a poor wild native, naked and helpless, is eviscerated and devoured. Obviously a difficult scene to render convincingly with naturalistic methods; from where I sat it appeared as if the actors were busy with* spaghetti alla pomodoro *and the cannibalism was only really a "symbolic" act.*

I counted twelve rather talented actors and actresses who were involved in the proceedings, now singing and dancing, now screaming and roaring, trying their very best to portray the very worst. Nausea, even with a bit of Sartrean existentialist method, is not easy to simulate. What is notable is only that the shock, which Arrabal has been so diligently preparing, doesn't quite last long enough. He tries so hard to keep on throwing up that the manic spectacle no longer seems to be earnest. It is not easy to maintain a spell on the stage, and especially so when the summer heat rises to a broil, and in the tiny Forum theatre in West Berlin all the little comfortable seats have been removed to give way to hard, low benches in order to facilitate the sense of punishment and puniness.

IT IS A BLACK EXERCISE *in nausea, and there are ambivalent moments when the loathsomeness is even amusing. There is an uplifting scene in which the rat-race for money is presented as an ice-hockey match (the puck playing the role of* Das Kapital*). One was also grateful for the dance of the bull and the bull-fighters which almost made one take matters of life-and-death with proper seriousness. For the rest, there is only Arrabal's final dilemma of how, after an excremental exercise of such totality, to find a positive note to end on. What, after all, could be positive in a world like this? Evidently his political friends (in France? in Spain?) gave him the tip: Revolution. That's the only solution, if solution there must be. Therefore: Build the barricades, raise the banner of revolt! End the "Thousand Year War" with a noble Festival of Death!*

And so the sweat-soaked ensemble, whom we have just seen marching in their black military boots (and little else) to demonstrate their disgust with military marches, now proceed to march again but this time in deep and happy purpose, sharp and positive; and the revolutionary music, as it triumphs over the old reactionary anthems, seemed to me (at least as I heard it on my hard bench) to be intoning a noble hymn, oh let us all kill together. . . .

I MIGHT AS WELL CONFESS *that, despite my discomfort, Arrabal's emetical efforts never quite succeeded; only at the end did a sense of sickness overcome, when he finally emerged to accentuate what he thought to be his positive revolutionary message. At the end there was also some applause from the* Premierenpublikum, *and even a few flowers. Flowers?*

Friedrich Luft

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London

CLOCKWORK CLICHÉ: What's in a Name? Manifestly, enough to give Warner Brothers an attack of titular horrors.

As the makers of that exquisitely nasty movie *A Clockwork Orange*, the masters at WB were furious when they learned that another film company was making an erotic epic called . . . *A Clockwork Blue*.

They appealed to the court who upheld their complaint, thus obliging the other company to change the title. The new name chosen was even more piquant: *A Tick-Tock Orange*.

Warners Brothers complained yet again—but were turned down this time.

DAILY MAIL

New York City

NORMAN INVASION: *Norman Mailer, the author of "The Naked and the Dead," has lodged a protest against the publication of a novel that depicts an intellectual named Norman Mailer being shot while he is partly naked.*

Mr Mailer made the complaint in his own words —many words—during a meeting with Alan Lelchuk, the novel's author.

"It was wild, really wild," said one witness to the meeting. "There was shouting and screaming and yelling." At issue was a relatively brief passage in Mr Lelchuk's work, "American Mischief," which is to be published by Farrar Straus and Giroux on January 8.

As printed in galley proofs, the scene depicts the murder of the fictional Mailer by a fictional young radical, Lenny Pincus. The fictional Mailer is shot in the buttocks while his trousers are down.

One supporter of Mr Lelchuk who attended the meeting reported that Mr Mailer began by pounding the conference table and shouting, "By the time this is over, Lelchuk, you ain't going to be nothin' but a hank of hair and some fillings." Mr Mailer observed that "I wouldn't die with my pants down."

Charles Rembar reported that Mr Lelchuk's voice had "reached a pitch and a decibel level that in the non-technical sense people would call hysterical."

Mr Lelchuk's supporter said that Mr Lelchuk had retorted angrily to Mr Mailer: "This is my first book and I'm not going to change it because of your pressure." Philip Roth, the author, was also present at the meeting and sided with Mr Lelchuk, a friend, saying, "It seems to me we're talking about censorship here."

Mr Lelchuk had cried angrily at Mr Mailer: "Listen, you're the father of us all, you're the one who taught us to go as far as you can with literature." This exchange was said to have ensued:

LELCHUK: "Listen, this is the way it works in the book."

MAILER: "I wouldn't die with my pants down."

LELCHUK: "I never met you [before this] and this is how I wrote the book and all you're saying that your view and my view are not contiguous."

NEW YORK TIMES

London

CHURCHILLIAN FOIBLES: *A literary curiosity from the Second World War to reach the shelves of the Public Record Office is a bulky file from the Prime Minister's offices entitled "Directives on Use of Particular Words and Names." This covers all Mr Churchill's wartime rulings on English language usage.*

One directive asked in 1944 for the BBC to speak of the capture of "Aix-la-Chapelle" by the Allies, rather than use the German name "Aachen." But the culmination came on April 23, 1945:

"I do not consider that names that have been familiar for generations in England should be altered to study the whims of foreigners living in those parts. Constantinople should never be abandoned, though for stupid people Istanbul may be written after it. . . . If we do not make a stand we shall in a few weeks be asked to call Leghorn Livorno and the BBC will be pronouncing Paris Paree. Foreign names were made for Englishmen, not Englishmen for foreign names."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

York

AMERICANISMS GO HOME: *I'm sorry [writes David Reibel of the University of York] that Mr Dixon Harry finds it degrading both to our language and people that the English language is being "invaded . . ." by the pseudo-Americanisms of manufacturers on the look-out for catchy new names for new products. But when he writes "The British will always be British and will not accept Americanised versions of perfectly good English words", he is only half right. If the British did not invent or accept them, how does he think they get into the language? It is a fact of history that English is already full of originally foreign words and phrases, not to mention grammatical constructions; and that it is spoken very widely all over the world by many other nations and races besides the British. The remedy for Mr Harry's complaint is very simple: don't use Americanisms if you don't like them. The only difficulty is in getting the patient to accept the cure.*

THE TIMES

London

PHRASE ORIGINS: Michael Foot is acquiring a Wilsonian memory for detail. In the House of Commons debate on Tuesday he recalled that the phrase "the smack of firm government" was the copyright of the *Daily Telegraph* unbeknownst to its own leader writer.

The original author of the phrase was the late Donald McLachlan, then deputy Editor, in January, 1956. He got the idea watching Lord Avon, then Prime Minister, at a lunch party given by Mrs Ian Fleming.

The Prime Minister was continually emphasising his points by approaching a right fist to an open left hand. But the two always stopped short of smacking together. This, McLachlan thought, typified the weakness of the Government at that time.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

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concluding sentence the burning Indian sky, the earth, the rocks *all* said *"No, not yet."* My point was that today, half-a-century later, this symbolism has an added impact.

T. R. FYVEL

London

"Arguing on the Box"

IN MORE THAN a column of evasion (ENCOUNTER, November) you try to slither round the main objection to the false record of a *Something To Say* programme printed without permission in your September issue. This is, quite simply, that it was hopelessly inaccurate, this being a demonstrable fact and not a matter of opinion. "Listeners hear what they hear", you protest feebly. But it is physically impossible for anyone to hear the successive parts of a discussion in the wrong order. The truth is that nobody heard, and nobody could conceivably have heard, anything remotely like what you published. Since the definitive way to check the accuracy of any record is to compare it with the original, Thames Television offered to re-run the programme for the Editor privately and let him simply see for himself how different was what ENCOUNTER had published from what had been transmitted on the air. He did not accept the invitation. He may have realised that to do so would make it completely impossible for him to write the defence of ENCOUNTER to which he then so shamefully put his initials.

BRYAN MAGEE

London

IT NEVER OCCURRED to me, when the Editor and I discussed the possibility of ENCOUNTER publishing that extract from the uncorrected script of my debate with James Baldwin [ENCOUNTER, September], that the Chairman and Producer of the programme would take such grievous offence ["Arguing on the Box", November, pp. 95–96]. It seemed to me, as a participant, nicely to catch the true flavour of the debate, better perhaps than would have been the case if the script had been tidied up. Far from distorting the exchange, my view was that it caught an embarrassingly true likeness, more a painting warts and all, so to speak, than a photograph.

But where Mr Bryan Magee does seem to me to have a very fair complaint is in the implication in my article—which the script extract unfortunately underlined—that all his programmes in this admirable series have been equally incoherent. May I say, as an act of contrition, that if I was writing my article again, I would instance *Something to Say* as the programme that least deserved my generally adverse comments on the intellectual level of television debates.

PEREGRINE WORSTHORNE

London

AUTHORS

Henry Fairlie's new book *The Kennedy Promise* will soon be published by Doubleday (New York) and Methuen (London). His "American Chronicle" entitled "Years of Intellectual Havoc "appeared in the September issue of ENCOUNTER. . . .

Rosemary Tonks is the author of two books of poems, *Notes in Cafés and Bedrooms* and *Iliad of Broken Sentences*; her novels include *Opium Box*, *The Bloater*, *The Way Out of Berkeley Square*, and most recently, *The Halt during the Chase* (Bodley Head, 1972). . . .

B. H. Haggin was for many years New York music critic for *The Nation* and is at present music critic for *The Hudson Review* and record critic for *The Yale Review*. His books include *Music Observed* (O.U.P., 1964), and *The Toscanini Musicians Knew* (1967) and *Ballet Chronicle* (1971), both published by Horizon Press who will be bringing out a new collection of his criticism in 1973. . . .

William Walsh, Professor of Commonwealth Literature in the University of Leeds, is the author of *The Use of Imagination*, *Coleridge*, *A Manifold Voice*, *R. K. Narayan*.

Friedrich Luft, perhaps the best-known of contemporary German drama critics, writes regularly for *Die Welt* from Berlin. . . .

Luigi Barzini's article in this number is based on his new introduction to his *Americans are Alone in the World*, just published by The Library Press (New York). Among his recent articles in ENCOUNTER are "Risorgimento" (September 1971), "Death of a Bandit" (May 1971), "Letter from Italy" (August 1970), and "Feltrinelli" (July 1972). . . .

THE "Resolution on Scientific Freedom" which appeared on p. 88 of our December issue was originally published in *The American Psychologist*, July, 1972. We regret that the usual credit-line was inadvertently omitted. . . .

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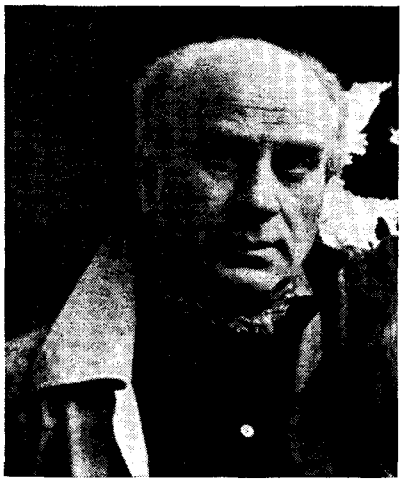
An important evaluation of the work of an artist whose contribution to Twentieth Century art is at last being acknowledged . . .



Jan Le Witt

"Jan Le Witt is a painter of 'inscapes.' These are the images of a new mythology, a mythology derived from the exploration of the inner world of feeling, expressed in forms taken from the inexhaustible index of nature.

"The creation of forms to be contemplated—I can think of no better description of this artist's activity. To succeed in such an activity, the forms must be endowed with qualities that sustain our interest and attention—qualities of harmony and resonance. These words, which are musical terms, very appropriately express the enduring nature of the sensation experienced in front of Jan Le Witt's paintings – works of art that are remarkable above all for their harmony."

Sir Herbert Read

"It is a passionate search for the original, the primordial. Geology, botany, celestial physics, are linked in Jan Le Witt's imagination, and with them music. This painter's music is beautiful, rich and enchanting." ***Jean Cassou***

". . . the true heir of Turner. But where Turner is all air and mist and water, Le Witt is all earth and rock and the bones and sinews of the substantial universe."

John Smith

". . . Here painting beats like a heart . . .
It would be quite useless to attempt to classify an achievement of this kind among the successive varieties of contemporary art, where intrinsic value gives place to mere novelty, and the eye retains nothing which will last. With forceful simplicity, Jan Le Witt has enlarged the world of creation."

Pierre Emmanuel
of the Académie française

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